Blessed Theophylact: Commentary on the Sunday Gospels

Blessed Theophylact -- Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

Blessed Theophylact was a true son of Byzantium, a product of the highly developed cultural and religious civilization emanating from the "queen of cities," Constantinople. Born on the Greek island of Euboia some time between 1050 and 1060, Theophylact went to Constantinople to study under the finest teachers of literature and rhetoric of his time. After his ordination, he served as deacon, assisting the Patriarch at Agia Sophia, and soon gained renown as a preacher of the Gospel and master of rhetoric. The Emperor Alexius I Comnenus made him the tutor of his future son-in-law, the heir presumptive.

About the year 1090 Theophylact was sent to the Macedonian city of Ochrid to be enthroned as Archbishop of the Bulgarian Church. Ochrid was the capital city of the Bulgarian kingdom that had been conquered by the Byzantine Emperor Basil II in 1018. In this demanding position in a conquered territory on the outskirts of the Empire, Blessed Theophylact conscientiously and energetically carried out his archpastoral duties over the course of the next twenty years or so.

Although a Byzantine by upbringing and outlook, he was a true father and archpastor of the Bulgarian Church, defending its interests and protecting its independence and prerogatives. He was instrumental in the spread of Byzantine culture that took place among the Balkan Slavs in the following centuries. As a language scholar, he also aided the development of a native Bulgarian Orthodox Church and literature, especially by the use of Old Church Slavonic Biblical and liturgical texts.

Countering the propaganda of the heretical Paulicians and Bogomils who were active in the region, he acted vigorously to protect his flock by ordaining dedicated and educated priests to teach Orthodoxy in the native Bulgarian language. He also showed his care for the Slavic people under his spiritual care by vigorously protesting the intoleraBlessede extortionist demands of tax collectors sent from Constantinople.

He endured many slanderous accusations that were made against him both within the diocese and in Constantinople, but he won the respect and love of

the faithful who saw his tireless labors on their behalf. It is during this period of his life as Archbishop of Bulgaria that he wrote his Explanation of the New Testament, and of the Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. He did so at the request of the princess Maria—the mother of the imperial boy he had earlier tutored, and who had now become the abbess of a convent. His Letters also date to this time, as well as two other writings for which he is well known: The Life of St. Clement of Ochrid and a treatise entitled: The Errors of the Latins in Ecclesiastical Matters.

The latter two works highlight two developments of enormous consequence for the history of the Church. The first is the spread of Orthodoxy Christianity into the Slavic lands; for St Clement of Ochrid was a disciple of Sts Cyril and Methodius, and he brought to fruition in Bulgaria the labors begun by his mentors in carrying the Orthodox faith to the Slavs in their own languages. The second is the tragic schism which occurred between the eastern and western halves of the Church. Blessed Theophylact wrote his treatise, The Errors of the Latins, only some fifty years after the exchange of anathemas between Rome and Constantinople in 1054. While firmly defending the Orthodox doctrinal position rejecting the Filioque, Blessed Theophylact writes with a tone of moderation rare for his time, urging from both sides a spirit of conciliation concerning matters of local custom.

The exact year of Blessed Theophylact's repose is not known, but the latest date that can be ascertained from his letters is 1108. The Serbian Orthodox Church, whose jurisdiction in later years came to include Ochrid and Macedonia, and other Orthodox Churches, commemorates Blessed Theophylact as a saint, on December 31.

Zacchaeus Sunday

Luke 19:1-10

1-10. And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was, and could not for the crowd, because he was of little stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down: for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. The Lord seizes the mightiest of the devil's vessels and destroys his cities. See how the Lord not only makes publicans His disciples, but He even takes prisoner —in order to save him—the chief of publicans, Zacchaeus. No one doubts that a publican is an abomination: how much more so is the chief publican, who is foremost in wickedness? For the publicans derived their living from no other source than the tears of the poor. But even this chief publican is not despised by the Lord. In return only for showing eagerness to see Jesus he receives salvation. He desired to see Jesus, which is why he climbed up into the sycamore tree, but before he had caught sight of Jesus, the Lord had already seen him. In the same manner, the Lord always anticipates us if only He sees that we are willing and eager. When the Lord sees Zacchaeus, He urges him to come down quickly, for He intends to stay at his house. And Zacchaeus was not slow to obey—when Christ commands anything, we must not hesitate—but he *came down and received Him joyfully*, even though many people murmured.

Let us see how Zacchaeus reaped the benefit of Christ's entrance into his house. He says, *The half of my goods I give to the poor*. Do you see his fervor? He began to disburse without stint, not giving just a little, but all

that he had. Even what he held back, he held back so that he could give to those whom he had wronged. From this we learn that there is no benefit at all to a man who gives alms to others of money he has obtained unrighteously and ignores those whom he defrauded in obtaining that money. See what Zacchaeus does with this money: if he defrauded anyone he restores to him fourfold, thus remedying the harm he had done to each man he defrauded. This is true almsgiving. He not only remedies the harm, but he does so with increase. This is in accordance with the law, which commanded that that the thief make fourfold restitution (Ex. 22:1). If we consider well, we see that nothing at all remained of Zacchaeus' money. Half he gave to the poor, and of the half that remained to him, he gave fourfold to those whom he had wronged. But since the living of the chief publican was derived from fraud and extortion, and since he paid back fourfold all that he had wrongly taken, it follows that he stripped himself of everything he had. From this we see that his thinking goes beyond the prescription of the law, for he had become a disciple of the Gospel, and he loved his neighbor more than himself. And what he promised to do, he did: he did not say, "I shall give half, and I shall restore fourfold," but instead, *Behold, I give and I restore*. For he had heard the counsel of Solomon, *Say not, Come back another time, tomorrow I will give* (Prov. 3:28).

Christ proclaims to him the good tidings of his salvation. By *this house* He means Zacchaeus, for the Lord would not call a building without a soul *a son of Abraham*. It is clear that that the Lord named this living master of the house a son of Abraham, because Zacchaeus was like the patriarch in two respects: he believed and was counted righteous by faith, and with money he was magnanimous and generous to the poor. See that the Lord sys that Zacchaeus is now a son of Abraham, and that in his present behavior the Lord sees the likeness to Abraham. The Lord did not say that Zacchaeus had always been a son of Abraham, but that he is now a son of Abraham. Before, when he was a chief publican and and tax collector, he bore no resemblance to that righteous man, and was not his son. To silence those who were complaining that the Lord went to be the guest of a sinful man, He says, *The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

This is the explanation of the literal words; but it is easy to understand these things in another sense as well, for moral benefit. Anyone who is chief

among many in wickedness is little in spiritual stature, for flesh and spirit are opposites to one another, and for this reason he cannot see Jesus *for the crowd*. Crowded in by a multitude of passions and worldly affairs, he is not able to see Jesus acting, moving and walking about. Such a man as this cannot recognize Christian acts for what they are—Christ acting and moving in us. But such a man, who never sees Jesus passing by and cannot perceive Christ in Christian acts, will sometimes change from negligence and come to his senses. Then he will climb up to the top of the sycamore-fig, passing by every pleasure and sweetness, as signified by the figs, and counting them as foolish and dead. Becoming higher than he was and making *ascents in his heart* (Ps. 83:6), he is seen by Jesus and can see Jesus, and the Lord says to him, *Make haste, and come down*, which means, "Through repentance you have ascended to a higher life; come down now through humility lest pride and high mindedness make you fall. Make haste, and humble yourself. If you humble yourself, I must abide at your house, for it is necessary that I abide in the house of a humble man. *Upon whom shall I look, if not upon him who is humble and meek, who trembles at My words?* (Is. 66:2) Such a man gives half of his goods to the destitute demons. For our substance is twofold: flesh and spirit. The righteous man imparts all his fleshly substance to the truly poor, the demons who are destitute of everything good. But he does not let go of his spiritual substance, for as the Lord likewise said to the devil concerning Job, *Behold, I give into thine hand all that he has, but touch not his soul* (Job 1:12). And if he has taken any thing from any man by false accusation, he restores it to him fourfold. This suggests that if a man repents and follows a path that is opposite to his former way of wickedness, he heals his former sins through the four virtues (courage, prudence, righteousness, and self-control), and thus receives salvation and is called *a son of Abraham*. Like Abraham, he also goes out of his land and out of his kinship with his former wickedness and out of the house of his father (Gen. 12:1), meaning, he comes out from his old self and rejects his former condition. He himself was the house of his father, the devil. Therefore, when he went out of *the house of his father*, that is, when he went out of himself and changed, he found salvation, as did Abraham.

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

10-14. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus within himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house counted righteous rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness—which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God—takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before.

The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For he says, *God, I thank Thee.* But the words that follow are full of foolishness. He does not say, "that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities," but Instead, "*I thank Thee that I am not* an extortioner or worker of iniquity." He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as something done by his own strength. How can a man who knows that what he has, he has received from God, compare other men to himself unfavorably and judge them? Certainly, if a man believed that he had received as a gift good

things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee *stood*, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, note what follows: he *would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. After stating, *God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are*, pointing to the failings of others, then he declares his good deeds, that he fasts twice a week and gives tithes of all that he possesses. The order of his prayer shows us that we must first refrain from wickedness, and then set our hand to virtue. One must not only turn away from evil, but also do good (Ps. 33:14). It is the same for a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring: only after he has cleaned out the mud can he draw pure water.

Consider this as well: the Pharisee did not say, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are." He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, and so he uses them in the plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, *I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are*, by contrast he points to himself, saying, *I fast twice in the Sabbath*, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called "the Sabbath," deriving its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called *Sabbat*, and the week was called *Sabbata*, being the plural form of *Sabbat*. Whence it is that *mian Sabatton* is the first day of the week, which we call "the Lord's Day" (Sunday). Among the Hebrews *mian* means the same thing as first.

There is also a more profound explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires

arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. “I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others,” he says, “that I give alms of everything I have.” Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy if you apply yourself diligently (Dt. 12:11,17)**.**

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

From the Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke by Blessed Theophylact,

Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

11-16. And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of the property that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there squandered his property with prodigal living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he longed to fill his belly with the pods that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. This parable is like those which precede it. For it also presents *a man*, Who is in fact God, the Lover of man. The two sons represent the two kinds of men, righteous and sinners. The younger son said, *Give me the portion of the property that falleth to me*. Of old, from the beginning, righteousness belonged to human nature, which is why the older son (born at the beginning) does not become estranged from the father. But sin is an evil thing which was born later. This is why it is the younger son who alienates himself from the father, for the latter-born son grew up together with sin which had insinuated itself into man at a later time. The sinner is also called the younger son because the sinner is an innovator, a revolutionary, and a rebel, who defies his Father's will.

Father, give me the portion of the property (ousia) that falleth to me. The essential property of man is his rational mind, his *logos*, always accompanied by his free will (*autexousia*), for all that is rational is inherently self-governing. The Lord gives us logos for us to use, according to our free will, as our own essential property. He gives to all alike, so that all alike are rational, and all alike are self-governing.3 But some of us use this generous gift rationally, in accordance with logos, while others of us squander the divine gift. Moreover, everything which the Lord has given us might be called our *property*, that is, the sky, the earth, the whole creation, the law and the prophets. But the later sinful generation, the younger son, saw the sky and made it a god, and saw the earth and worshipped it, and did

not want to walk in the way of God's law, and did evil to the prophets. On the other hand, the elder son, the righteous, used all these things for the glory of God. Therefore, having given all an equal share of logos and self-determination, God permits us to make our way according to our own will and compels no one to serve Him who is unwilling. If He had wanted to compel us, He would not have created us with logos and a free will. But the younger son completely spent this inheritance. Why? Because he had gone into *a far country*. When a man rebels against God and places himself far away from the fear of God, then he squanders all the divine gifts. But when we are near to God, we do not do such deeds that merit our destruction. As it is written, *I beheld the Lord ever before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken* (Ps. 15:8). But when we are far from God and become rebellious, we both do, and suffer, the worst things, as it is written, *Behold, they that remove themselves from Thee shall perish* (Ps. 72:25).

The younger son indeed *squandered* and scattered *his property*. For every virtue is a simple and single entity, while its opposing vice is a many-branched complexity, creating numerous deceptions and errors. For example, the definition of bravery is simple, that is, when, how, and against whom, one ought to make use of one's capacity to be stirred to action. But the vice of not being brave takes two forms, cowardice and recklessness. Do you see how logos can be scattered in every direction and the unity of virtue destroyed? When this essential property has been spent, and a man no longer walks in accordance with logos, by which I mean the natural law, nor proceeds according to the written law, nor listens to the prophets, then there arises *a mighty famine—not a famine of bread, but a famine of hearing the word (logos) of the Lord* (Amos 8:11). And he begins *to be in want*, because by not fearing the Lord he has departed far from Him. But *there is no want to them that fear the Lord* (Ps. 33:9). How is there no want to them that fear Him? Because *blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; in His commandments shall he greatly delight. Therefore glory and riches shall be in his house,* and far from being himself in want, *he hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor* (see Ps. 111). Therefore the man who makes a journey far from God, not keeping God's dread face ever before his eyes, indeed is in want, having no divine logos at work in him.

And he went, that is, he proceeded and advanced in wickedness, *and joined himself to a citizen of that country*. He who is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him. But he who is joined to a harlot, that is, to the nature of

the demons, becomes one body with her (I Cor. 6:16) and he makes himself all flesh, having no room in himself for the Spirit, as it was for those men at the time of the flood (Gen. 6:4). The citizens of that country far from God are none other than the demons. The man who joins himself to these citizens, having advanced and become powerful in wickedness, *feeds the swine*, that is, he teaches others evil and filthy deeds. For all those who take pleasure in the muck of shameful deeds and carnal passions are like swine. Pigs are never able to look upward because of the peculiar shape of their eyes. This is why, when a farmer grabs hold of a pig, he is not able to make it stop squealing until he turns it upside down on its back. This quiets the pig, as if, by looking upward, the pig can see things it had never seen before, and it is startled into silence. Such are they whose eyes are ever turned to filthy things, who never look upward. Therefore, a man who exceeds many others in wickedness can be said to *feed swine*. Such are the keepers of brothels, the captains of brigands, and the chief among publicans. All these may be said to *feed swine*. This wretched man desires to satisfy his sin and no one can give him this satisfaction. For he who is habitual in sinful passions receives no satisfaction from them. The pleasure does not endure, but is there one moment and gone the next, and the wretched man is again left empty. Sin is likened to the pods which the swine eat, because, like them, sin is sweet in taste yet rough and harsh in texture, giving momentary pleasure but causing ceaseless torments. Therefore, there is *no man* to provide satisfaction for him who takes pleasure in these wicked passions. Who can both satisfy him and quiet him? Cannot God? But God is not present, for the man who eats these things has traveled a far distance from God. Can the demons? They cannot, for they strive to accomplish just the opposite, namely, that wickedness never end or be satisfied.

17-21. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son.

The man who until now had been prodigal *came to himself*. This is because he was "outside himself" and had taken leave of his true self so long as he committed foul deeds. Rightly is it said that he wasted and spent his essential property. This is why he was outside himself. For he who is not governed by logos, but lives irrationally without logos, and teaches others to do the same, is outside of himself and has abandoned his reason, which is his very essence. But when a man regains his logos (*analogizetai*) so as to see who he is and into what a state of wretchedness he has fallen, then he becomes himself again, and using his reason, he comes to repent and returns from his wanderings outside reason. He says *hired servants*, signifying the catechumens, who have not yet become sons because they have not yet been illumined by Holy Baptism. Indeed the catechumens have an abundance of the rational bread, the sustenance of the Word (Logos), because they hear each day the readings of Scripture.

Listen, so that you may learn the difference between a hired servant and a son. There are three ranks of those who are being saved. The first kind are like slaves who do what is good because they fear the judgment. This is what David means when he says, *Nail down my flesh with the fear of Thee, for of Thy judgments am I afraid* (Ps. 118:120). The second kind, who are like hired servants, are those who are eager to serve God because of their desire for the reward of good things, as David again says, *I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes for ever for a recompense* (Ps. 118:112). But if they are of the third kind, that is, if they are sons, they keep His commandments out of love for God. This is what David means when he says, *0 how I have loved Thy law, 0 Lord! The whole day long it is my meditation* (Ps. 118:97); and again, with no mention of fear, *I lifted up my hands to Thy commandments which I have loved* (Ps. 118:48), and again, *Wonderful are Thy testimonies*, and because they are wonderful, *therefore hath my soul searched them out* (Ps. 118:129). One must understand the *hired servants* to refer not only to the catechumens, but also to all those in the Church who obey God out of some lesser motive than love. Therefore when a man is among the ranks of those who are sons, and then is disowned because of his sin, and sees others enjoying the divine gifts, and communing of the Divine Mysteries and of the Divine Bread, such a man ought indeed to apply to himself these piteous words, *How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, arise,* that is, from my fall into sin, *and go to my*

Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee. When I abandoned heavenly things, I sinned against heaven, preferring shameful pleasure to heavenly things, and choosing the land of hunger instead of my true fatherland, heaven. Just as we have a saying that the man who prefers lead to gold sins against the gold, so too the man who prefers earthly things to heaven, sins against heaven. Indeed he has gone astray from the road that leads to heaven. Understand that when he sinned, he behaved as if he were not acting in the sight of God, that is, in the presence of God; but once he confesses his sin, then he realizes that he has sinned *in the sight* of God.

And he arose, and came to his father, for we must not only desire the things that are dear to God but must get up and do them as well. You see the warm repentance—behold now the compassion of the father. He did not wait for his son to come to him, but he went and met him on the way and embraced him. God is called *Father* on account of His goodness and kindness, even though by nature He is God Who encompasses all things so that He could have restricted a man within His embrace, no matter which way the man might try to turn. As the prophet says, *The glory of God shall compass thee* (Is. 58:8). Before, when the son distanced himself, it was fitting that God, as Father, release him from His embrace. But when the son drew near through prayer and repentance, it was fitting that God again enclose him within His embrace. Therefore the Father *falls on the neck* of the one who before had rebelled and who now shows that he has become obedient. And the Father kisses him, as a sign of reconciliation, and by this kiss He first makes holy the defiled one's mouth, which is as it were the doorway to the whole man, and through this doorway He sends sanctification into the innermost being.

22-24. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the first robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the grain-fed bullock, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. The *servants* you may understand to mean the angels, the ministering spirits who are sent to serve those who are counted worthy of salvation. For the angels clothe the man who has turned from wickedness with *the first robe*, that is, with the original garment which we wore before we sinned, the garment of incorruption; or, it means that garment which is honored above all others, the robe of Baptism. For the baptismal robe is the first to be placed around me, and from it I receive a

covering of my former shame and indecency. Therefore you may understand *the servants* to mean the angels who carry out all those things that are done on our behalf, and by means of which we are sanctified. You may also understand *the servants* to mean the priests. For they clothe the repentant sinner with Baptism and the word of teaching, placing around him *the first robe*, which is Christ Himself (*for all we that have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*, Gal. 3:18). And they put *a ring on his hand*, which ring is the seal of Christ given at Chrismation so that we might execute good deeds in His name. The *hand* is a symbol of action, and the *ring* is a symbol of a seal. Therefore he who has been baptized, and, in general, everyone who has turned from wickedness, ought to have on his hand, that is, on his entire faculty of action, the seal and the mark of Christ, which is placed on him to show that he has been made new in the image of his Creator. You may also understand the ring to signify *the earnest of the Spirit* (II Cor. 1:21-22). By that I mean that God will give us perfect and complete good things when it is time for them; but for now He gives us gifts as earnest, that is, as tokens of assurance of those good things to come. For example, to some He gives the power to work miracles, to others the gift of teaching, and to others still other gifts; having received these gifts, we have more confident hope in the perfect and complete good things to come.

And *shoes* are put on his feet to protect him from scorpions, that is, from the seemingly small and hidden sins described by David (Ps. 18:12), which are in fact deadly. And these shoes also protect him from serpents, that is, from those sins which can be seen by all. And, in another sense, shoes are given to him who has been counted worthy of *the first robe*: God makes such a man ready to preach the Gospel and to bring benefit to others. This is Christianity—to benefit one's neighbor. We are not ignorant of what is meant by *the grain-fed bullock (ton moschon ton siteuton)* which is slain and eaten. It is none other than the very Son of God, Who as a Man took flesh which is irrational and animal by nature, although He filled it with His own glory. Thus Christ is symbolized by the bullock, the Youngling which has never been put under the yoke of the law of sin; and He is *grain-fed* in the sense that Christ was set apart and prepared for this mystery from before the foundation of the world. And though it may seem somewhat difficult to take in, nevertheless it shall be said: the Bread which we break in the Eucharist appears to our eyes to be made of wheat (*sitos*) and thus may be

called *of wheat* (*siteutos*); but in reality it is Flesh, and thus may be called the *Bullock*. For Christ Himself is both Bullock and Wheat. Therefore every one who is baptized and becomes a son of God, or rather, is restored to the status of son, and in general, every one who is cleansed from sin, communes of this Bullock of Wheat. Then he becomes the cause of gladness to the Father, and also to His servants, namely, the angels and the priests, because he who was dead is alive again, and he who was lost is found. For whoever is dead from the abundance of his wickedness is without hope; but whoever is able, with his changeable human nature, to change from wickedness to virtue, is said to be merely *lost*. To be lost is less severe than to be dead.

25-32. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the grain-fed bullock, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gayest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the grain-fed bullock. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. Here is the celebrated question—how is it that the son who lived a God-pleasing life in all other respects, and who faithfully served his father, could display such envy? The question will be answered if one considers the reason why this parable was told. This parable and the ones preceding it were told because the Pharisees, who considered themselves pure and righteous, were grumbling at the Lord because He received harlots and publicans. The Pharisees murmured indignantly, believing themselves to be more righteous than the publicans, which is why the Lord presented this parable. Consider that the figure of the son who is seen to grumble is understood to refer to all those who are scandalized at the sudden good fortune and deliverance of sinners. Such men grumble, not because of envy, but because neither they nor we can understand the outpouring of God's compassion for man. Does not David

bring forward the figure of a man scandalized at *the peace of sinners* (Ps. 72:3)? And Jeremiah likewise, when he says, *Why is it that the way of ungodly men prosper? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root* (Jer. 12:1-2). Such thoughts reflect man's weak and poor understanding, which easily ignites with annoyance and questions the good fortune of the wicked, which seems undeserved.

In this parable, therefore, the Lord is saying to the Pharisees words like these: "Let us suppose that you are as righteous as that elder son and well-pleasing to the Father; I entreat you who are righteous and pure not to grumble, as this elder son did, against the gladness which we are showing over the salvation of the sinner, who is also a son." Do you see that this parable is not about envy? Instead, by means of this parable, the Lord is instructing the minds of the Pharisees, so that they will not be vexed that the Lord receives sinners, even though they themselves are righteous and have fulfilled every commandment of God. It is no wonder that we too become vexed at those who appear undeserving. God's compassion is so great, and He gives to us so abundantly of His own good things, that we may even grumble at His generosity. That criticism follows generosity is a fact to which we refer in everyday speech. If we do good to someone who fails to thank us, we often say to him, "Everyone says I am a fool for having been so good to you." We use this expression, even if no one has actually criticized us, because extreme generosity is so often followed by criticism that to suggest the latter is to prove the former. But let us turn to the particulars of the parable, in brief.

The elder son was in the field, that is, in this world, working his own land, meaning his flesh, so that he might have his fill of bread, sowing with tears so that he might reap with rejoicing. When he learned what was being done, he did not want to enter into the common joy. But the compassionate father goes out and begs him to come in, and explains to him the reason for the joy, that a man who was dead has come back to life. Because as a man he did not understand, and because he was scandalized, the elder son accused the father of not giving him even a young goat, while for the prodigal son he slaughtered the fatted calf. What does the kid, the young goat, signify? You may learn here. Every young goat is considered to be of the portion of sinners who are placed on the left side. The righteous son is saying, then, "I have passed my life in toil and labor, I have been persecuted, suffered

hardships, been oppressed by sinners, and on my behalf you have never slaughtered and killed a kid, that is, a sinner who afflicts me, so that I might have some small measure of rest." For example, King Ahab was just such a goat to the Prophet Elijah. Ahab persecuted Elijah, but the Lord did not quickly give this goat over to the slaughter so that Elijah could have some small rest, and take his ease with his friends, the prophets. Therefore Elijah complained to God, *Lord, they have digged down Thine altars, and have slain Thy prophets* (III Kings 19:10) And Saul was a goat to David, as were also all those who slandered David. But the Lord allowed them to tempt him, and did not slay them to give David some rest. Therefore David said, *How long shall sinners, 0 Lord, how long shall sinners boast* (Ps. 93:3)? The elder son in the parable is saying these things: "You did not count me worthy of any consolation in all my toils; you never handed over to me for slaughter any of these who were afflicting me. But now you save the prodigal son who never had to toil."

This is the entire purpose of the parable—to correct the Pharisees who were grumbling that He had accepted sinners. The parable also instructs us that no matter how righteous we may be, we ought not to rebuff sinners, nor to grumble when God accepts them. The younger son, therefore, represents the harlots and the publicans; the elder son represents those Pharisees and scribes who consider themselves righteous. It is as if God were saying, "Let us suppose that you are indeed righteous and have not transgressed any commandments; if some others have turned away from wickedness, why do you not accept them as your brothers and fellow laborers?" I am not unaware that some have interpreted the elder son to signify the angels, and the younger son, the latter-born nature of men which rebelled against the commandment it was given and went astray. Still others have said that the two sons represent the Israelites and the Gentiles who later believed. But the simple truth is this: the person of the elder son signifies the righteous, and the person of the younger son signifies sinners who have repented and returned. The entirety of the parable is given for the sake of the Pharisees, to teach them not to be vexed that sinners are received, even if they themselves are righteous. Let no one be vexed at the judgments of God—let him be patient with those apparent sinners who prosper, and are saved. How do you know whether a man whom you think is a sinner has not repented,

and on this account has been accepted? Or that he has secret virtues on account of which God looks favorably upon him?

Meatfare Sunday -- The Last Judgment

Matthew 25:31-46

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

31-33. When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Since the first coming of the Lord was not with glory but with dishonor and indignity, He says, When He shall come in His glory. For at the second coming He will come with glory, escorted by angels. First He will divide the saints from the sinners, delivering them from tribulations, and set them on His right, and then speak to them. He calls the saints sheep on account of their gentleness, and because they yield fruit and useful things for us, as do sheep, providing wool, which is divine and spiritual protection, and milk, which is the sustenance that is needed. The goats are the sinners, for they walk along the precipices and are unruly and fruitless.

34-40. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye fed Me: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. He does not give honor or punishment until He has first judged. For He loves mankind and teaches us to do the same as well, not to punish until we have made a careful examination. In this way those blessed as they have been accepted by the Father. He considers them to be inheritors of the kingdom to show that God makes them participants in His own glory as His sons. For He did not say, "receive", but rather inherit, as a man would say of his father’s estate. By the least brethren He means either His own disciples or,

simply, all the poor. For every poor man is Christ's brother for the very reason that Christ, too, spent His life in poverty. See also God's righteousness, how He acclaims the saints; and see the good disposition of their mind, how they deny, with befitting modesty, that they have cared for Him. But the Lord accepts as for Himself the things that were done for the poor.

41-46. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave Me nothing to eat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, or in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. He sends those on the left into the fire which had been prepared for the devil. For as the demons are without compassion and are cruelly and maliciously disposed towards us, it is fitting that those who are of like mind with them, and who have been cursed by their own deeds, should merit the same punishment. See that God did not prepare the fire for men, nor did He make hell for us, but for the devil—I make myself liable to hell. Tremble, then, O man, and understand from this that these men were not punished as fornicators, or robbers, or perpetrators of any other vice, but for not having done good. For indeed, if you consider things well, the robber is he who has much and does not give alms, even if he does no obvious injury. For whatever he has in excess of his needs, he has stolen from those who are in need and who have not received anything from him. For if he had shared these things with them, they would not be in need. Now that he has locked these things up and kept them for himself, for this very reason they are in need. So he who does not give alms is a robber, doing injustice to all those whom he could have helped but did not, and for this reason he and those like him shall go away into eternal punishment which never ends; but the righteous shall enter into eternal life. Just as the saints have unceasing joy, so too the unjust have unceasing punishment, despite the gibberish of Origen who says that there is an end to hell and that sinners will not be punished for ever, but that

there will be a time when they enter the place of the righteous because they have been purified by suffering in hell. (1) Origen is clearly refuted here, both when the Lord speaks of everlasting punishment, that is, never ending, and when He likens the righteous to sheep and the sinners to goats. For just as a goat can never become a sheep, neither can a sinner ever be cleansed and become righteous after the Judgement. Outer darkness [mentioned in the preceding parable of the talents] is that which is furthest from the light of God and for that reason renders the punishment more harsh. There is another reason that could be mentioned, and that is that the sinner is in darkness even in this life, as he has fallen away from the Sun of Righteousness, but as there is still hope of conversion, this is not yet the outer darkness. But when he has died and an examination has been made of the things he has done, then the outer darkness in its turn receives him. For there is no longer any hope of conversion, but he undergoes a complete deprivation of the good things of God. While he is here in this life he enjoys to some degree the good things of God, I mean, the tangible things of creation, and he believes that he is in some manner a servant of God, living out his life in God's house, which is this creation, being fed by Him and provided with the necessities of life. But then he will be altogether cut off from God, having no share at all in the good things of God. This is that darkness which is called outer by comparison to the darkness here, which is not outer because the sinner is not yet completely cut off from this time onward. You, then, O reader, flee from this absence of compassion, and practice almsgiving, both tangible and spiritual. Feed Christ Who hungers for our salvation. If you give food and drink to him who hungers and thirsts for teaching, you have given food and drink to Christ. For within the Christian there is Christ, and faith is nourished and increased by teaching. If you should see someone who has become a stranger to his heavenly fatherland, take him in with you. While you yourself are entering into the heavens, lead him in as well, lest while you preach to others, you yourself be rejected. If a man should cast off the garment of incorruption which he had at his baptism, so that he is naked, clothe him; and if one should be infirm in faith, as Paul says, help him; and visit him who is shut up in the dark prison of this body and give him counsel which is as a light to him. Perform, then, all of these six types of love, both bodily and also spiritually, for we consist of both soul and body, and these acts of love are to be accomplished by both.

1. Origen's false teaching of apokatastasis, the restoration of all things, was condemned as a heresy at the Fifth Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 553 A.D.

Forgiveness Sunday

If Ye Forgive Men Their Trespasses
Matthew 6:14-21
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Again He teaches us not to remember wrongs. He reminds us of the Father so that we might revere Him, since we are the children of such a Father, and not act as fierce beasts, refusing to forgive.

15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. God, Who is meek, hates nothing more than cruelty.

16. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. "Disfigurement of the face" is an artificial discoloration of the face, painting it pale, so that one does not appear as he really is, but feigns mournfulness.

17-18. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father Who is in secret: and thy Father Who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Men of old would anoint themselves with oil after bathing as a mark of their joy and well-being. So you also, O reader, should appear joyful when you fast. The oil used to anoint we also understand to mean almsgiving. (1) Our Head is Christ, Which we should anoint with deeds of mercy; and our face, that is our senses, we should wash with tears of repentance.

19-21. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and corruption doth destroy, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor corruption doth destroy, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Having first cast out the sickness of vainglory by what He said before, now He speaks about non-possessiveness. For men possess more than they need because of vainglory.

He shows how unprofitable earthly treasure is—moth and corruption consume food and clothing, and thieves steal gold and silver. Then, anticipating the objection that not all treasure is stolen, the Lord says, "Even if nothing is lost in this manner, are you not wretched for being nailed down by your worries over wealth?" This is why He says, Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

1. The Greek words for "olive" and "mercy," elaios and eleos, are very similar to the ear, though apparently unrelated in etymology. The holy fathers frequently draw these two words into association with one another.

Sunday of Orthodoxy

Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?

John 1: 43-51

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

43-45. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Andrew, by listening to the Forerunner, and Peter, by listening to Andrew, both followed Christ. But it appears that Philip, without the prompting of another, obeyed Jesus at once when He said to him, Follow me. How was he convinced so instantaneously? It appears, first of all, that the voice of the Lord stung his soul with love. The sound of the Lord's voice was not like that of any other; for those who were worthy, it immediately kindled within them a burning love for Him. As Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus said, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way? [Lk. 24:32] Furthermore, Philip had pondered earnestly within his heart, and continuously studied the books of Moses, and was always waiting for the coming of the Christ; therefore, as soon as he saw Him, he was convinced. This is why he said, We have found … Jesus, which shows that he had always been seeking Him. Perhaps he had learned something about Christ from Andrew and Peter. Because they were of the same city, it is likely that they had talked together and discussed the Lord. The Evangelist seems to imply this when He says, Now Philip was of … the city of Andrew and John. This was a very small city, more like a village. Therefore, we should marvel at Christ's power, that from such insignificant places He chose His pre-eminent disciples. Philip does not keep this good thing to himself, but shares it with Nathanael. Because Nathanael was a diligent student of the law and knew it thoroughly, Philip refers him to the law and the prophets. Philip calls the Lord the son of Joseph, because they thought He was his child. And he names Him of Nazareth, although He was, properly speaking, of Bethlehem. He was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. Because the manner of His birth was hidden from most, while His upbringing was apparent, they called Him Jesus of Nazareth.

46-48. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Philip had said that Christ was from Nazareth. But Nathanael, astute in the law, knew from the Scriptures that the Messiah should come from Bethlehem. This is why he said, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip answered, Come and see, knowing that once he tasted Christ's words, he would never leave Him. Christ commends Nathanael for being a true Israelite, who said nothing either to curry favor or to cause enmity. Nathanael's words stemmed not from disbelief, but from a discerning mind well-versed in the law, which knew that the Christ would come from Bethlehem and not from Nazareth. How then does Nathanael respond to the Lord? Does he become conceited from these words of praise? Not in the least. Persisting in his desire to establish clearly and certainly the identity of this Man, he asks, Whence knowest Thou me? Then the Lord reveals His very divinity by speaking of things which no one could have known except Nathanael and Philip, because they had spoken and acted alone. Although He was not present, Christ knew all that had taken place when Philip spoke with Nathanael. This is why is He says, when thou wast under the fig tree. Before Philip drew near, the Lord spoke these words concerning Nathanael, lest anyone should suspect that Philip had told Him of the fig tree and his conversation with Nathanael. At once Nathanael understood Who the Lord was, and confessed Him to be the Son of God. Hear what he says:

49-51. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Prophecy has great power, even greater than miracles, to move a man to believe. The demons are able to simulate miracles and appear to do them. But no one can have clear foreknowledge of future events, and predict them accurately, not even an

angel, and even less so, the demons. Therefore the Lord drew Nathanael to Himself by telling him the place where he had been standing, and that Philip had called to him, and that he was a true Israelite. When he heard these things Nathanael sensed the greatness of the Lord, as much as he was able to at that time, and confessed Him to be the Son of God. Yet his confession was not the same as Peter's. [See Mt. 16:16-18.] Peter confessed Him to be the Son of God, that is, true God. Therefore the Lord blessed Peter, and entrusted the Church to him. But Nathanael confesses Him to be merely a man Who by grace and His own virtue has been adopted as a son of God. This is made clear by what he says next, Thou art the King of Israel. Do you see? Nathanael has not yet attained to the perfect knowledge of the true divinity of the Only-begotten. He believes in Him as a man beloved by God, and as the King of Israel. If he had confessed Him to be truly God, he would not have called Him the King of Israel, but the King of all. Therefore the Lord does not bless him, as He did Peter, but corrects him, and leads his thoughts upwards to comprehend something of His divinity. Ye shall see, He says, the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. He is saying, "Do not understand Me to be merely a man, but rather the Master of the angels." He Whom the angels serve cannot be merely a man, but only true God. All these things did, in fact, take place at His Crucifixion and Ascension. As the time of His Passion approached, an angel from heaven strengthened Him; at His Tomb there was an angel, and again at His Ascension, as Luke relates. [See Acts 1:10-11.] Some have understood the fig tree to represent the law. Like the fig, the law contains sweetness, but it is hard to get at, covered over, as with leaves, by the harshness of the legal observations and the difficulty of the commandments. They say, then, that the Lord saw Nathanael, that is, looked down graciously upon him, and knew his thoughts, while he was still under the law. Consider this interpretation as well, O reader, if you find it pleasing: the Lord saw Nathanael under the fig tree, that is, under the law, or, within the law, searching out its depths. If he had not been searching out the depth of the law, the Lord would not have seen him. Know this as well, that Galilee means "rolling down." The Lord, then, went forth to that place in this world which is sunk low, that is to say, to our human nature. And while we were still under the fig tree, under the sway of sweet sin, which is mixed with much bitterness on account of the regret and the punishments which follow, the Lover of man saw us, and chose those who confess Him to be

the Son of God and the King of each one who sees God (for Israel means "seeing God"). Indeed, if we persevere with zeal, He will count us worthy to see greater things than these. We shall behold angels ascending to the height of divine knowledge of Him, and descending again, because they cannot know His unknowable essence. In another sense, a man ascends when he immerses himself in the study of the divinity of the Only-begotten, and he descends when he delights in the contemplation of His Incarnation and descent into hades.

Second Sunday of Lent

The Paralytic Borne by Four
Mark 2:1-12
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Mark
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-5. And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. And they come unto Him, bringing a paralytic who was borne by four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the paralytic, Child, thy sins be forgiven thee. What does this mean—after some days? [Theophylact is here interpreting for his contemporary Greek reader of 1100 AD the somewhat difficult New Testament Greek phrase di'emeron. Tr.] It means, "when several days had gone by." When Jesus had entered the house, the people heard that He was inside and all came running, hoping that it would be easy to meet Him there. The faith of those men was so great that they even made an opening in the roof through which they lowered the paralytic. Thereupon the Lord healed him, seeing the faith of those who carried him, or of the paralytic himself. For the paralytic would not have agreed to be carried if he himself had not believed that he would be healed. Many times the Lord healed the unbelieving sick on account of the faith of those who brought them. Similarly, He often healed the one brought to Him because of that mans faith, despite the unbelief of those who brought him. First He forgives the sins of the sick man and then He cures the disease, since the most severe illnesses occur for the most part as a result of sins. So it is that the Lord said of the paralytic in Johns Gospel that it was as a result of sins that the man had been paralyzed. (John 5:5-15) But the paralytic in Johns Gospel is not the same one mentioned here. For the man in Johns account had no one to help him, while this man had four. And that man was by the Sheeps Pool; this man was in the house. And this one was in Capernaum, while the other was in Jerusalem, to name but a few differences. But know that the paralytic mentioned by Matthew (9:2-8) and the one mentioned here by Mark are one and the same.

6-12. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And Jesus, immediately knowing in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralytic, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins—He saith to the paralytic—I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. When the Lord said that He could forgive sins, the Pharisees falsely accused Him of blasphemy, since God alone can forgive sins. But the Lord gives yet more evidence that He is God, by knowing what was in their hearts. God alone knows what is in the heart of each, for, as the prophet says, "Thou alone knowest the hearts of the sons of men." (II Chron. 6:30, III Kings 8:39) Although the Lord had revealed their innermost thoughts, the Pharisees remained senseless, not conceding that He Who knew their hearts could heal their sins as well. By healing the body, the Lord makes credible and certain the healing of the soul as well, confirming the invisible by means of the visible, and the more difficult by what was easier, though it did not appear so to the Pharisees. For the Pharisees thought it was more difficult to heal the body, because it was something visible. And they thought that it was easy to say that the soul had been healed because this healing was invisible. Perhaps they were thinking thoughts like these: "Look at this deceiver. He declined to heal the body which is visible, and instead claims to heal the soul which is invisible, saying, ’Thy sins be forgiven thee.’ Certainly, were He able, He would heal the body rather than pretend to do something that cannot be seen." Therefore the Saviour shows them that He is able to do both, saying, "Which is easier? To heal the body or the soul? Certainly it is easier to heal the body, but you think just the opposite. So I will heal the body, which in fact is easy, although it seems difficult to you. By so doing I will confirm the healing of the soul as well, which is difficult although it seems easy because it is invisible and cannot be verified." Then He says to the paralytic, Arise, and take up thy bed, to confirm even more that the miracle was not a phantasy, and also to show that He had not only healed him but

had filled him with strength. The Lord does the same with our spiritual sicknesses. He not only delivers us from our sins, but fills us with strength to do His commandments. Therefore I too who am a paralytic can be healed. For Christ at this very moment is in Capernaum, which, interpreted, is the house of comfort and consolation, which is the Church. For the house of the Comforter is the Church. I too am a paralytic, for the powers of my soul are inert and will not move to do good. But if I am carried by the four Evangelists and brought to the Lord, then I will hear Him call me, Child, (for by doing His commandments I become a son of God) and my sins will be forgiven me. But how can I be brought to Jesus? If they make an opening in the roof. And what is the roof? It is my mind, which over-arches all that is within me. It is a roof made of many earthen and clay tiles, signifying earthly affairs. But if all these things are pulled away, and the strength of the mind within us is opened up and freed of the weight of earthly things, then I will be lowered, that is, I will be humbled. For I ought not to rise up in pridefulness that I have been unburdened of earthly things; but instead, after I have been unburdened of earthly things, I ought to be lowered, that is, humbled. Then I will be healed and I will take up my bed, which is my body, and employ it to do the commandments. For I should not only be raised up from sin and understand that I sin; I should also take up my bed, that is, get my body up and set it to do good. Then we shall also be able to see with spiritual eyes, so that all our thoughts within us can say, We never saw it on this fashion, which means, "We never understood until now that we were paralytics and have now been healed." Only he who has been cleansed of sins sees things as they truly are.

Third Sunday of Lent

Veneration of the Holy Cross

Mark 8:34b - 9:1

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Mark

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

34-37. And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever desireth to follow after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever desireth to save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospels, the same shall save it. For what shall it profita man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? [In this passage of St. Mark, and in the following commentary, the single Greek word, psyche, has been translated as either ’life’ or "soul" as it has both these meanings. See also Theophylact's Explanation of St. Matthew, pp. 30, 61, and 193. Tr.] Since Peter had rebuked Him for wanting to be crucified, the Lord called the people unto Him, and said in the hearing of all, but directing His words mostly towards Peter, "Do you find fault with Me, Peter, because I take up the cross? I say to you, that neither you, nor anyone else, will be saved unless you die for the sake of goodness and truth." See that Christ does not compel a man to die on a cross against his own will. Instead He said, Whosoever desireth. The Lord is saying: "I compel no one. I invite him to something good, not to something bad to which he must be forced. Whoever does not want these things is not worthy of them." We can learn what it means to deny oneself if we understand what it means to deny another. He who denies another is he who, when he sees his brother, or servant, or father, being flogged or even murdered, does not turn towards him and pity him in his suffering, but acts as if he were a stranger to him. In this same manner the Lord wants us to show no pity towards our own bodies, so that even if we are flogged, or worse, let it make no difference to us. Let him take up his cross, that is, accept a most shameful death, for at that time to die on a cross was considered the most shameful of deaths. But since many were crucified for being bandits, the Lord added to the crucifixion something else: that one ought to have virtue. This is what it means to follow Me. Although His command that one give oneself over to death seemed hard and cruel, the Lord straightway shows this commandment is given out of love for

mankind. For whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find life. (But the death of a condemned man, or of one who hangs himself, is not for Christs sake and brings no such reward.) And, on the contrary, he who appears to have saved his life, far from finding life, shall lose it by not remaining steadfast during his time of martyrdom. Do not say to Me, "But he has saved his life"—it means nothing. Even if you say that he has gained the whole world as well, it is of no benefit. No one can exchange money for his salvation, for if that were so, a man who had gained the world but lost his soul, could, while burning in the flames of hell, use his money to buy innocence. But at that time and in that place no such trade can be made. Here let us shut the mouths of those who say, following Origen, that all the souls in hell will be restored [and reunited with those in heaven] after they have been punished in accordance with their sins. (1) Let them hear that there is no exchange that can be made there for ones soul. No one is kept in hell as a punishment. Rather, it is the weight of his own sins which holds him there.

38-9:1. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And He said unto. them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. Intellectual faith does not suffice, but confession of faith with ones mouth is required as well. Since man himself is two-fold, let his sanctification be two-fold as well. The soul is sanctified by faith, but the body is sanctified by confessing. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed to confess that the Crucified One is his God, of him also shall the Crucified One be ashamed. For the Lord shall judge that man to be an unworthy servant, when He comes with glory, escorted by the angels, and no longer in lowly form. At the second coming He will not appear, as He did before, to be of base origin and circumstance, and an object of scorn. Since He speaks of His own glory, He desires to show that He is not vainly boasting, and says, There be some of them that stand here, namely, Peter, James, and John, who shall not die until I have shown them at the Transfiguration the glory with which I shall appear at the second coming. For the Transfiguration was nothing less than a foreshadowing of the

second coming, and as He appeared in radiance then, so will He shine at the second coming, as will also all the righteous.

1. This false teaching of Origen, apokotastasis, the general restoration of all fallen creation, was condemned by the Church as heresy at the Fifth Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 553 AD.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Only by Prayer and Fasting

Mark 9:17-31

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Mark

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

14-18. And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him, saluted Him. And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh hold of him, it teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and wasteth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they could not. When He came to His disciples, that is, to the nine that had not gone up onto the mountain with Him, He saw that they were being questioned by the Pharisees. For the Pharisees had seized the opportunity of Jesus absence to attempt to turn the disciples away from the Lord. The multitude, however, suddenly caught sight of Him, and greeted Him. They had been longing to see Him, and now they caught sight of Him and greeted Him as if He had just returned from a long journey. Some say that even His appearance had become more beautiful from the light of the Transfiguration which drew the multitude towards Him to greet Him. A man in the crowd spoke in answer to the Lords question. This man was weak in faith, as even the Lord attests when He says, 0 faithless generation, and again, all things are possible to him that believeth. The man himself attests to his unbelief when he says, Help Thou mine unbelief. His complaints against the disciples clearly shows his unbelief. For he ought not to have accused them in front of everyone, but privately.

19-27. He answereth him, and saith, 0 faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me. And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tore him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Since a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and

help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and tore him much, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. The man who approached the Lord accused the disciples of not having the power to heal. But the Lord turns the blame onto him, all but saying, "It is your unbelief which is the cause of your sons not being healed." The Lord does not address only this man, but He directs this saying to all, reproaching all the Jews for their unbelief. For it is likely that many of the bystanders were also scandalized by the disciples inability to heal. The Lord shows that He welcomes death, when He says, How long shall I be with you? meaning, it is a torment to Me to live with you and your unbelief. But though He reproaches them, He grants the healing as well. He does not desire to heal the son as a show of His power, but rather He proceeds with great humility. See how He does not attribute the healing to His own power, but to the mans faith, when He says, All things are possible to him that believeth. As soon as He saw a crowd beginning to gather around, He rebuked the spirit, not wanting to heal in front of the multitude as though for show. When He rebuked the spirit and said, Come out of him, and enter no more into him, this suggests that because of the mans unbelief, the demon would have again entered into him if it had not been prevented by the Lords command. The Lord permits the spirit to rend the son, so that all might recognize the attack of the demon, and understand that it would have killed the man if it had not been held in check by the hand of God. A man is thrown by a demon into the fire of anger and desire, and into water, meaning, into the pounding surf of worldly cares. This demon is both mute and deaf. It is deaf, not wanting to hear the words of God; and it is mute, not able to teach others what ought to be taught. But if Jesus, Who is the Word of the Gospel, should take him by the hand, that is, strengthen his power to act, then that man will be freed from the demon. See how God first helps us, and then we ourselves are required to work. For the Evangelist says that Jesus lifted him up—this is the divine help—and he arose—this is the effort of the man himself to do good.

28-29.And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast it out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. The disciples were afraid they had lost the grace which the Lord had given them, and this was why they had not been able to cast out the demon. See that out of respect they approached the Lord privately. This kind—what kind? The kind which may make their abode in lunatics, or, in general, the whole race of demons, does not come out except through prayer and fasting. Both the one suffering, and the one about to heal, must fast. Both are necessary. Good sense dictates that the one suffering must fast. He must not only fast, but also pray; and he must not only pray, but also fast, for true prayer is rendered when it is yoked to fasting. When the one who prays is not weighed down by the effects of food, his prayer is not burdened and ascends easily.

30-31. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. Whenever the Lord spoke of His passion on the cross, He would precede and follow His words with miracles, so that no one could think that He would suffer because He was powerless. And when He spoke sad words, such as, they shall kill Him, He would add words of joy, He shall rise the third day, teaching us that gladness always follows after grief, and that we should not anguish needlessly in our sorrows, but should hope for better things.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Can Ye Drink of the Cup That I Drink of?

Mark 10:32b-45

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Mark

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

32-34. And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again. Why does He foretell the things that will happen to Him? To prepare and to calm the minds of the disciples, so that having heard of these things beforehand they would more easily endure them, and not be overwhelmed all at once in their anguish. He also foretold these things so that they would know that He suffered them of His own will. Although He knows these things beforehand, and is able to flee from them, He does not do so, thus making it abundantly clear that He willingly gives Himself over to His sufferings. The Lord takes the disciples aside privately to speak with them alone. For His Passion is a mystery to be revealed only to those closest to Him. And this is why on the road He leads the way before them all, wanting to separate His disciples from the rest of the crowd. But also, by leading the way, He shows that He hastens to His Passion, and does not evade His death which is for our salvation. Although He lists all these sorrowful things that will happen, yet there is one consolation, that He will rise on the third day.

35-39. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we want that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask. And He said unto them, What do ye want that I should do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. Another Evangelist says that the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached

Christ. [Matt. 20:20] It is likely that both events took place. The apostles were embarrassed, and had their mother go first, and then they themselves approached Christ in private. This is what the Evangelist means here when he says that they come unto Him, that they approach Him in private, apart from the others. Let us learn what it was they asked. They thought that His going up to Jerusalem meant that He was going to ascend the throne of an earthly kingdom, and that after He had become king He would suffer those things which He said He would suffer. With this understanding, they are asking to sit at His right hand and His left. This is why the Lord rebukes them for asking for something foolish. Ye know not what ye ask, He says. You are thinking that My kingdom is an earthly kingdom, and you are asking for an earthly throne. But it is not so; rather, these things are beyond your understanding. To sit at My right hand is something so great that it goes beyond what even the angelic hosts can do. You are craving honor and glory, but I am calling you to die. By baptism and cup He means the cross. For a cup of wine is something a man gladly accepts, and it quickly puts him to sleep. And baptism is something which is done to cleanse sins. But James and John gave their promise without understanding what He said, thinking that He was speaking of an actual cup of wine, and the washing of the body which the Jews performed before they ate.

39-40. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized with shall ye be baptized: but to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. Martyrdom, He is saying, will be yours, and you will die for Truth's sake. [For bold confession of the Truth James was beheaded in Jerusalem in 45 AD, and John was cruelly tortured in Rome and then exiled to the island of Patmos. Tr.] But to sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to give. Two questions may be asked: first, has it been prepared for anyone to sit there? Second, is the Master of all unable to bestow this seat? In answer we say that no one will sit at His right or at His left. Although in many places of Scripture you hear mention of sitting upon a seat in heaven [Mt. 19:28, Lk. 13:29, Eph. 2:6, etc.], understand that this refers to great honor, not a chair. It is not Mine to give has this meaning: it is not for Me, the Just Judge, to bestow this honor as a favor, for that would not be just. Instead, this honor has been prepared for those who have contested and struggled for it. It is as if a just king had

set a day for a contest of athletes, and then some of his friends come to him and say, "Give us the crowns." The king would say, "The crowns are not mine to give; rather, a crown is prepared for that contestant who shall compete and win." So too with you, 0 sons of Zebedee, you shall be martyrs for My sake; but if there is one who, along with martyrdom, exceeds you in every virtue, he shall precede you in honor.

41-45. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are thought to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. The disciples are still subject to human weaknesses, and here they are stung with envy. This is why the ten were displeased with the two. When did they begin to be indignant? When they realized they had not been received by the Lord, and thought they had been pushed away. As long as the ten were shown honor by the Lord, it did not bother them that the Lord held these two in special honor. But here when they see these two asking for honor, the others could no longer endure it. Although they act in this imperfect way now, later you will see each one of them conceding the first place of honor to the other. Christ heals them, first calming them by calling them to Himself, and then showing them that to grasp for honors and to desire the chief place is the behavior of Gentiles. For the Gentile princes lord it over others in a tyrannical and domineering manner. But it is not so with My disciples, He says; instead let him who would be great serve all the others, for the mark of a great soul is to endure all things and to serve everyone. The example of this is near at hand: the Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve, and, what is even greater, He came to give His life as a ransom for many. What could be greater and more marvelous than a man who not only serves, but even dies for the sake of the one he serves? Yet the Lords serving and His humble lowering of Himself to be with us has become the exaltation and the glory of Him and all creation. Before He became man, He was known only to the angels; but after His incarnation and crucifixion, His glory is even greater and He reigns over all the earth.

Palm Sunday

Entrance into Jerusalem

John 12:1-18

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-3. Then Jesus six days before the Pascha came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of myrrh of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the fragrance of the myrrh. On the tenth day of the month the Jews take the sheep which will be slaughtered for the Pascha, and from that time they begin the preparations for the feast. Therefore, six days before the Pascha, which is the ninth day of the month, they make a bountiful dinner which they consider a prelude to the feast. Coming to Bethany, Jesus also dines. To emphasize the great miracle of the raising of Lazarus the Evangelist says, Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Having appeared from the tomb alive, he did not soon return to death, but remained among them a long time, eating, drinking, and living a normal life. By saying that Martha served, the Evangelist indicates that the dinner was in her house. Behold the faith of this woman, who did not permit servants to do the serving, but herself performed this duty. Paul says of the widow who was well reported of for good works, "if she have washed the feet of the saints." [I Tim. 5:10] Martha, then, serves all, but Mary reserves her honor for Christ alone, attending to Him not as a man but as God. She poured out the myrrh and wiped His feet with her hair, not regarding Him a mere man, as did many of the others, but Master and Lord. Maria can be understood allegorically to mean that which leads upwards to the divinity of the Father and Lord [kyrios] of all. For Maria means "mistress ruler" [kyria]. Thus the Ruler of all, the Divinity of the Father, has anointed Jesus' feet, signifying the flesh of the Lord in the last times, namely, God the Word, with the oil of the Spirit. As David says, Wherefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness. [Ps. 44:6] And the great Peter says, Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. [Acts 2:36] The Flesh, assumed by the Word, and anointed by the divine Spirit

Which entered the Virgin's womb, became what the Word is—God. And It filled the world with fragrance, just as the house was filled with the fragrance of Mary's myrrh. What meaning do we see in the hairs which wiped the feet? They represent the saints who the adorn the head of God and His supreme authority. Existing for the glory of God, they may be called His adornment and have become fellow sharers in the anointing of Christ's Flesh. Hence David says [in the Psalm quoted above], more than Thy fellows. And Paul says to the Corinthians, Now He Who establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God. [I Cor. 1:21] We know that throughout the world those who live according to Christ are called "Christs." (1) Therefore the hairs that wiped Jesus' feet represent Christians, who share in the divine anointing. Just as hair is something dead, so too those who belong to Christ are dead. They have crucified the flesh, mortified their members that are on the earth, and died to the world. [See Gal. 5:24.] Hair is the adornment and glory of the head—the saints are the glory of God, their light shines before men, and the Father is glorified by them. [See Mt. 5:16.] Even their eating and drinking is to the glory of God, Whom they glorify in their members. And for you, O reader, Jesus has also resurrected your fallen mind like another Lazarus, and you have received Him into the house of your soul, and that which is risen feasts together with Him. Therefore anoint the feet of the Lord six days before the Pascha, before the dawning of the Pascha of the age to come, while you still live in this world which was fashioned in six days. The feet of Christ are the Apostle [Book] and the Gospel, in a word, His commandments. By these Christ walks in us. To these commandments bring myrrh, namely, a disposition composed of many virtues, of which the finest is faith as warm and pungent as costly spikenard. If you do not show a fervent, zealous and virtuous bond to Christ's commandments, and wipe them with your mortified members, as with hair, taking them to yourself, you will not be able to make your house fragrant. The Lord's feet are also the least brethren, in whom Christ walks to each man's door asking for what is needed. Anoint these too with the myrrh of almsgiving. There are many who give alms, but make a show of doing so, and thereby gain nothing. For they have their reward in this world. [Mt. 6:2] Wipe the feet [of these brethren] with the hair of your head and receive the benefit in your soul, and gather the reward of almsgiving in that principal and governing part of a man. If there is a part

of you that is dead and lifeless, like hair, anoint it with this good chrism. For it is written, "Blot out your sins with almsgiving." [See Dan. 4:24.]

4-8. Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, Why was not this myrrh sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and held the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she done this. For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always. Being a lover of money, Judas criticizes Mary's way of showing honor. What he is saying is, "Why did you not offer Him money (so that I could steal it) instead of myrrh?" How can it be that another Evangelist says that all the disciples asked this question? [Mt. 26:8-9] We may say that all the disciples did speak these words, but the others did not share Judas' disposition. The Lord does not rebuke him although He knew that he spoke with a thieving mind. He wished to avoid shaming him, thus teaching us also to be patient and long suffering with such individuals. But in a veiled manner He does chide him for his treachery and willingness to betray Him to death out of love of money. He mentions His burial to wound Judas' unfeeling heart with a pang of conscience, in order to correct him if at all possible. His next words have the same purpose: "the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always, because in a little while I will go away, since you are plotting My death. If I am annoying to you and the honor shown to Me grieves you, wait a short while and you will be free of Me; then you will know if it was indeed for the poor that you needed the sale of the myrrh." If Judas was in fact a lover of money and a thief, why did the Lord give him control of the purse? For the very reason that he was a thief, so that he could not use his love of money as an excuse for his betrayal. He had sufficient consolation for his weakness from handling the purse, but despite this he was not faithful. He bare, which means, carried off and stole, what was put therein, committing sacrilege by taking for himself what had been given for godly purposes. (Let plunderers of sacred things take note whose fate they share.) But the culmination of his wickedness was that he betrayed the Lord. Do you see where love of money leads? To betrayal. Well does Paul call it the root of all evil, since it lead, in this case, to betrayal of the Lord, and in every other instance does exactly the same. [I Tim. 6:10] Some say that Judas was entrusted with the ministry of the funds because it was

lower than the other forms of serving. To care for the funds is a lesser ministry than teaching, as the Apostles say in the Book of Acts, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. [Acts 6:2]

9-11. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed in Jesus. These people who came to Jesus showed good sense and judgment, as opposed to those who senselessly raged against Him. For they came, the Evangelist says, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also. Indeed, because the miracle was so astounding, many wanted to see the resurrected man, and perhaps hoped to hear something from Lazarus about the others who were with him in hades. But the Pharisees were so inhuman that they desired to kill not only Jesus, but also Lazarus, who had become the cause of salvation for many of the guileless who were lead to faith by means of the miracle worked in him. Thus the Pharisees considered the good he had experienced to be his crime. Above all they were vexed that with the great feast approaching all the people were rushing to Bethany to hear about the miracle and become eyewitnesses of the resurrected man.

12-13. On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,the King of Israel. Jesus had first withdrawn into the desert for a while to calm the rage of those intent on His murder. Now He enters boldly into the city and appears to all. The time of His Passion is at hand, and He no longer hides, but gives Himself for the salvation of the whole world. Consider the sequence of the Passion. Saving the greatest miracle for last, He raised Lazarus from the dead. As a result many ran to Him and believed. Because many believed, there was greater envy and rage, leading to the plot and the Cross. When the multitude heard that Jesus was coming, they met Him with greater glory and honor than a mere man would deserve. They no longer considered Him merely a prophet, for which prophet had their fathers ever honored in this manner? Thus they also cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. From

these words we may infer, first, that He is God. For Hosanna means "Save now," as it is written in Greek in the 117th Psalm according to the Seventy. There the Hebrew Hosanna is rendered in Greek as O Lord, save now. (2) The power to save is God's alone, and to Him are addressed the words, "Save us, O Lord our God." From many passages one must conclude that Scripture attributes salvation to God alone. First of all, the Psalms of David which refer to Christ say that He is God. Furthermore, they say that He is true God. For it says here, He that cometh, and not, "He that is led." The latter would be the sign of a servant; the former is the sign of power and authority. The words, in the name of the Lord, show the same thing, that He is true God. They do not say that He comes in the name of a servant, but in the name of the Lord. They also reveal that He is not an adversary of God, but one who comes in the name of the Father, as the Lord Himself says, I am come in My Father's name, whereas another shall come in His own name. [Jn. 5:43] And they called Him the King of Israel, as if thinking of a physical kingdom. They were awaiting a king stronger than human nature to be raised up who would save them from the Roman power.

14-16. And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on the colt of an ass. These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him. Why do the other Evangelists [speak of the Lord's instructions to find the young ass] and say, Loose him and bring him hither, while John is silent about this, saying merely, when He had found a young ass? [See Mt. 21:2; Mk. 11:2; and Lk. 19:30.] Do they perhaps disagree? Not at all. What the others said in more detail, John expresses in summary by saying, when He had found a young ass. When the disciples had untied it and brought it to Him, then He found it and sat thereon. In doing so He fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah who said, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh to thee, sitting on the colt of an ass.[See Zech. 9:9.] Because most of the kings of Jerusalem were wicked and tyrannical, the prophet said, "Fear not, O Zion. The king of whom I prophesy to you will not be like the others, but meek and humble, displaying no arrogance whatsoever." This is shown by the fact that He came seated upon an ass. He did not enter the city at the head of an army, but conveyed by a donkey. His sitting upon an ass was also a symbol

of things to come. Being unclean according to the law, the ass represents the uncleanliness of the Gentile race, upon whom Jesus, the Word of God, sits, subduing like a colt this insubordinate and uninstructed people, this new race, and leading it into the true Jerusalem once it has been tamed and made obedient to Him. Has the Lord not gathered the Gentiles into heaven, once they became His people and were obedient to His preaching? As for the palms, do they not indicate perhaps that He Who raised Lazarus has become the Victor over death? For palms were awarded to those who were victorious in games and contests. Perhaps they also indicate that He Who is being praised is a heavenly Being Who has come from above. Of all trees it is the palm that appears to soar upwards to the very heavens, so to speak; it bears foliage at the top, and at the peak puts out young white shoots, but the stump and the middle section of the trunk, all the way to top, are rough and hard to climb because of the sharp spines. So it is that he who strives to acquire knowledge of the Son and Word of God will find it a hard and uphill journey because of the toil of gaining virtue. But when he has arrived at the pinnacle of knowledge, he will be met, as if by the whitest palm shoots, by the bright light of divine knowledge and the revelation of ineffable things. Marvel with me, O reader, how the Evangelist is not ashamed, but boldly displays the former ignorance of the Apostles. These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified. By glory he means the Lord's Ascension after the Cross and Passion. Only then, by the coming of the Holy Spirit, did they understand that these things were written of Him. That these things were written, perhaps they knew; but that they referred to Jesus, they did not know, and providentially so. They would have been scandalized by His Crucifixion if [they had understood that] Scripture Itself had proclaimed Him King, and then He had suffered these things.

17-18. The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare witness. For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him. The Evangelist is saying that the people who saw the miracle which He worked for Lazarus were witnesses and heralds of His power. This is why He was met with glory by

the people who had heard, that is, believed, that He had done this miracle. If they had not believed, they would not have congregated so swiftly.

1. "Christ" [Christos] means literally "the Anointed One." For the followers of Christ, instead of the usual word "Christians" [Christianoi] Blessed Theophylact here uses the simple plural form of "Christ," Christoi, to stress the close union between Christ and the members of His mystical Body, the Church.

2. O Lord, save now; O Lord, send now prosperity. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord and has appeared unto us. Ps. 117:25-26.

PASCHA
In the Beginning Was the Word
John 1: 1-17
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria
1. In the beginning was the Word. I will say again here what I have already said in the preface, that the other Evangelists give a lengthy account of the Lord's birth in the flesh, His childhood, and His growth to manhood, while John omits these things altogether because they have been dealt with sufficiently by his fellow disciples. Instead, he takes as his theme the Godhead Who became man for our sake. But if you consider carefully, the other Evangelists did not neglect to speak of the divinity of the Only-begotten Son. They too declared it, but not at length. Nor was John so intent on the more exalted Word that he neglected the economy of the Incarnation; for it is one and the same Spirit Which moved and inspired all the Evangelists. John, then, tells us about the Son, for the Father was already known from the Old Testament. Yet John is not silent about the Father on that account; on the contrary, he mentions the Father while speaking of the Son. He shows that the Only-begotten is eternal when he says, In the beginning was the Word, which means, "From the beginning." Because He is from the beginning, there is no time when He was not. "How do you know," one might ask, "that In the beginning means the same as 'from the beginning'?" We know this both from the common meaning of the words,

and in particular because this same Evangelist says so in one of his Epistles: That Which was from the beginning, Which we have heard. [I Jn. 1:1] Do you see how the Beloved Apostle himself interprets these words? "Yes," one might answer, "but I understand In the beginning to mean what it meant to Moses when he said, In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. [Gen. 1:1] In the beginning, there, does not mean that the things God made are eternal; why, then, should In the beginning, here, mean that the Only-begotten is eternal?" So speaks the heretic. But to such quibbling, we say this, "O cunning sophist, why do you say nothing about the words that follow? But we will mention them, even if you do not. In that place Moses said, In the beginning God made heaven and the earth. But here John says, In the beginning was the Word. What similarity is there between the words made and was? If it were written here, "In the beginning God made the Son," I would keep silent. But instead it is written, In the beginning was. From this I understand the Word to be eternal, and not from a later point in time, as you say in your babbling. Why did the Evangelist say, In the beginning was the Word, and not, "In the beginning was the Son?" Listen: he did so on account of the weakness of his listeners, so that we would not, in the very first words, hear of a "Son" and at once imagine a passionate and carnal birth giving. He calls Him Word, so that you may learn, O readers, that just as a word is born from the mind without passion, in the same manner the Word was begotten of the Father without passion. He also called Him Word because Christ the Word proclaimed to us the things of the Father, just as every word and speech proclaims the thoughts of the mind. He is also called the Word to show that the Word is co-eternal with the Father. Just as it is impossible to say that the mind ever existed without words, so too is it impossible that God the Father ever was without the Son. The Evangelist said the Word, using the definite article, for there are many other words of God, as for example, prophecies and commandments. It is said of His angels that they are mighty in strength, that perform His word [Ps. 102:18], that is, His commands. But the very Word Himself is divine essence and Person. (1)

1. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. Here he shows more clearly that the Son is co-eternal with the Father. So that you would not imagine that the Father ever was without the Son, the Evangelist states that the Word was with God [pros ton Theon], that is, together with God in

the bosom of the Father. You should understand that pros here means "with," as it does elsewhere in the Scriptures: And are not His brothers and His sisters here with us [pros mn]? [Mk. 6:3] This means "living with us and among us."' It is not possible that God is ever without word and reason, without wisdom, or without power. Therefore, since the Son is the Word [Logos], the Wisdom, and the Power of God, we believe that He always was with God, meaning, with the Father. But how is it possible to be the Son and not come after the Father? Learn from an example in the material world. The brightness of the sun is from the sun, is it not? Most certainly. Does it then come after the sun, so that the sun is understood to have once been without brightness? This is impossible. How can the sun not have brightness? How much more is this true of God the Father and God the Son? Because the Son is the brightness of the Father, as the Apostle Paul says [Heb. 1:3], we must believe that the Son always shone forth together with the Father, and did not come after Him. Consider how Sabellius the Libyan is refuted by these words. He taught that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one person, and that this one person sometimes appeared as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit. Sabellius babbled these things, being himself the son of the father of lies, and full of the evil spirit. He is openly rebuked by these words: and the Word was with God. The Evangelist speaks most clearly here that the Word is one thing, and God the Father is another. Because the Word was together with God, it is clear that two Persons are presented, though these two share one nature. The proof that there is one nature is this: and the Word was God. Do you see that the Word is God? Therefore the Father and the Son have one nature, because there is one divinity. Let both Arius and Sabellius be put to shame. Arius, who said that the Son is the creation and work of the Father, is shamed by this: in the beginning was the Word …and the Word was God. And Sabellius, who said there was a unity, not a Trinity, of persons, is shamed by this: the Word was with God. The great John here proclaims clearly that the Word and the Father are different from each other, but not different in kind. They are different in their persons, but one and the same in their natures. I will give an example to make the thought more clear. Peter and Paul are different from each other because they are two different persons; but they are not different in kind, because they have the same human nature. This is how we must teach concerning the Father and the

Son: They are different from one another in their two persons; but They are not different in kind, because They share the same divine nature.

2. The same was in the beginning with God. God the Word never was separated from God the Father. Since he had said that the Word was God, he wanted to quell any devilish suspicion that might disturb us, that perhaps, because the Word was God, He may have risen up against the Father, and separated Himself from Him, and become the enemy of the Father, as the gods behave in Greek mythology. This is why John says that, while the Word indeed is God [and equal in power to the Father], yet He is always together with the Father, and never separated from Him. We should also address the Arians. Listen, you deaf men who say that the Son is the work and creation of God the Father: understand what name the Evangelist has given to the Son of God. He called Him Word. But you name Him work and creation. He is Word, not work or creation. "Word" is twofold. There is the inner word [diathetos logos] which we possess even when we are not speaking, namely, the faculty of speech. When a man is not talking, and even when he sleeps, the power of word and speech is still within him. There is also the outward word [prophorikos logos], when we articulate with our lips the inner power of speech, bringing it forth into activity and deed. Therefore, "word" is twofold, yet neither aspect fittingly describes the Son of God. For the Word of God is neither the spoken word nor the inner power of speech. These things pertain to the physical world and to us. The Word of the Father is above nature and is not subject to any analysis of the things of this world. Therefore the sophistry of Porphyrius the Greek was rendered useless and vain when he tried to refute the Gospel by using such distinctions. If the Son of God is Word, he said, He is so either as spoken word or as the inner power of speech. But since He is neither one nor the other, He cannot be Word at all. But the Evangelist foresaw this argument and disarmed it by saying that the distinction between inner and outer speech is used in reference to us and the physical world. But to that which is beyond nature, there is no such thing. It should also be said that if the name Word was truly worthy of God, and if He were called this in a literal and essential sense, then the doubt of the Greek would be justified. But this is not the case. Not only does this name, Word, not apply literally and essentially to God, but no other name can be found that would do so. It merely indicates the passionless begetting of the Son from the Father, as a

word springs forth from the mind, and it shows that the Son is an Angel of the Father's will. Therefore, why do you lay hold of the name with your sophistry, wretched Porphyrius? And how is it that when you hear Father, Son, and Spirit, you descend to material things, and imagine in your mind carnal fathers and sons, and an aerial spirit, such as the North Wind or the South Wind, or something else which whips up storms? But if you wish to learn what kind of Word is the Word of God, listen to what follows.

3. All things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made which was made. Do not think, the Evangelist is saying, that the Word is like a spoken word which is uttered and then dies away in the air. The Word is the Maker of everything, both that which is perceived by the mind and that perceived by the senses. Again the Arians leap to the attack, saying, "We may also say that a door was made by a saw, that is, by a tool, yet the craftsman who moves the tool differs greatly from the tool itself. Therefore, where it is written that all things were made by the Son, it does not mean that the Son is the Maker, but that he is an instrument, just like the saw. God the Father is the Maker Who uses the Son as His tool. Therefore the Son is something which was created for the very purpose of making all other things, just as a saw is made as the tool by which crafted items are produced." This is how the wicked band of Arians speaks. How do we answer? Simply and directly, that if, as they claim, the Father created the Son to be the instrument whereby He fashioned the world, then the Son would be held in less honor than the created world. The things made by a saw are more precious than the saw itself, which is only a tool. The saw was made for the sake of the things which it will produce; the crafted objects were not made for the sake of the saw. In the same vein, creation would be honored more highly than the Only-begotten Son, since the Father made the Son, they say, for the sake of creation, and if He had not intended to make the universe, neither would He have formed the Only-begotten Son. What could be more foolish than these words? "But," protests the Arian, "why did the Evangelist not say directly, 'The Word Himself made all things,' but instead that the Father made all things by [dia] the Son?" Why? So that you would not think that the Word, because He was uncreated and without beginning, was also an enemy and rival of God. Imagine a king intending to build a new city, who entrusts the work to his son. If one said, The city was founded by the son of the king, this would not mean that the son of the king

is a servant. It would show, instead, that the son has a father and that he is not acting alone. So it is here, that when the Evangelist says that all things were made by the Son, he shows that the Father used Him, as it were, as an intermediary in the creating, not as someone inferior to Himself, but, on the contrary, as One of equal power, able to carry out such a great command. I will add this: if you are still troubled by the preposition by, and want to find in Scripture some expression that says that the Word Himself made all things, listen to the words of David. In the beginning, O Lord, Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. [Ps. 101:25] You see that he did not say, "By Thee were the heavens made and the foundation of the earth was laid," but, Thou didst lay the foundation, and "these things are the work of Thy hands." That David said this concerning the Only-begotten Son and not the Father, you may learn from the Apostle Paul himself, who used these lines in his Letter to the Hebrews. [Heb. 1:8-10] It is also clear in the very same Psalm. For when it says that the Lord hath looked upon the earth, to hear the groaning of them that be in fetters, to loose the sons of the slain, to declare in Sion the name of the Lord [Ps. 101:20-21], to whom else can it refer except the Son of God? For it is He who looked upon the earth, meaning either this earth on which we move, or our nature which became earthly, or our flesh of which it was said, Earth thou art. [Gen. 3:20] This earthly flesh He took upon Himself and loosed us who were bound by the bonds of our own sins, and freed us, the sons of the slain, Adam and Eve, and declared in Sion the name of the Lord. For He stood in the temple and taught concerning His Father, as He Himself says, I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me. [Jn. 17:6] To Whom do these things apply, to the Father or to the Son? Certainly, they apply to the Son. For the Son declared the name of the Father as He taught. After saying these things, the blessed David then adds the words, In the beginning, O Lord, Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. Does not David clearly present the Son as the Maker, and not as an instrument? But if the preposition dia still seems to you to indicate something lesser and inferior, what will you say when Paul uses this same preposition to refer to the Father? For he writes, God is faithful, by [dia] Whom ye were called into the communion of His Son. [I Cor. 1:9] Surely Paul here does not suggest that the Father is an instrument. And again, Paul, …an apostle …by [dia] the will of God. [I Cor. 1:1] But enough said: let us return to where we

began. All things were made by Him. Moses described the visible creation and revealed nothing to us concerning the creation of the noetic world. But the Evangelist with one word includes all. All things were made by Him, both the visible and the noetic. And without Him was not any thing made that was made. The Evangelist first says that all things were made by the Son. Then, to dispel any idea that the Son also created the Holy Spirit, he carefully defines the words, all things. Every thing which is by its nature created was made by the Word. But the Spirit is not part of created nature, and therefore It was not made by the Son. Without the power of the Word was not any thing made that was of a created nature.

4. In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of men. The Pneumatomachoi (2) read this verse and the previous as follows: "And without Him was not anything made." Here they punctuate, and read the next words as the beginning of a new sentence: "[That] which was made was life in Him." They interpret the passage according to their own understanding, claiming that here the Evangelist is describing the Holy Spirit and saying that the Holy Spirit was life. The followers of Macedonius give this interpretation in their eagerness to show that the Holy Spirit is a created thing and to categorize Him among the things that have been made. We do not give the text such an interpretation, but place a period after the words, which were made, and read the words, In Him was life, as the beginning of a new sentence. Because he had spoken of the creating of things, that all things were made by Him, now he speaks of the providence and care which the Word has for His creation. He says that the Word did not simply create the world and then withdraw from it, but that it is He Himself Who sustains the life of all that has been created. For he says, In Him was life. I know that one of the saints has read this passage as follows, And without Him was not anything made that was made in Him. Here he punctuates and begins again, "He was life." I consider that this reading is not in error, and that it contains the same Orthodox understanding. This saint thought in Orthodox manner that without the Word there was not anything made that was made in Him. For I say that every thing that was made and created in Him, the Word, was not made without Him. Then in the new sentence, He was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. (3) The Evangelist names the Lord Life, because it is He Who sustains the life of every living thing, and Who gives spiritual life to all reason

endowedcreatures. He is Light, not light perceivable by the senses, but noetic light which enlightens the soul itself. He does not say that the Lord is the light of the Jews only, but of all men. For we can say that all men have been enlightened by Him, inasmuch as we all have received mind and reason [logos] from the Word [Logos] Who created us. For the reason bestowed upon us, by which we are called rational [logikoi] creatures, is a light to guide us into what we ought, and ought not, to do.

5. And the Light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.The Light, namely, the Word of God, shineth in the darkness, which means, It shines in death and in deception. Even when He Himself was dead, He so completely vanquished death that He compelled death to vomit forth those whom it had swallowed before Him. And the preaching of the Word also shines amidst the deception of the pagan Greeks. And the darkness comprehended it not. Neither death nor deception overcame it, for this Light, God the Word, is unconquerable. Some have thought that darkness means "flesh" and "life." For the Word shone forth while in the flesh and in this life. And the darkness, that is, the opposing power of the evil one, tempted and persecuted the Light, but found It to be unassailable and invincible. Darkness means "flesh," not according to the nature of flesh —far from it!—but because of sin. Flesh contains absolutely nothing evil when it is directed in accordance with its nature. But when directed against its nature and made to serve sin, it is called, and indeed becomes darkness.

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. After the Evangelist has declared to us the existence of God the Word from before the ages, and because he is about to speak of the Word becoming flesh, he inserts here an account of the Forerunner. Since John is the Forerunner of the Lord, is it not fitting that an account of the Forerunner’s nativity should precede that of the Lord’s nativity in the flesh? The Evangelist says of the Forerunner that there was a man sent from God. False prophets are not from God. When you hear that he was sent from God, do not think that the Evangelist is speaking of anything individual or human. Here all is divine. This is why John is also called an "angel," for the virtue of an angel is that he speaks nothing of himself. But when you hear him called an "angel," do not think that he was an angel by nature, or that he came down from heaven. Rather, he is called an angel because of his work and ministry: to

be a servant of the preaching and to announce the Lord. Therefore the Evangelist himself refutes the opinion of many who suspected that John was an angel by nature, when he says, There was a man sent from God.

7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. This man was sent by God in order to bear witness of the Light. Lest anyone imagine that the Only-begotten was in need of this witness because He Himself lacked in something, the Evangelist immediately follows his statement, that John came to bear witness to the Son of God, with the reason, namely, that all men through him might believe. Did all men in fact believe through him? No. In what sense, then, did the Evangelist say, that all men ...might believe? As much as it was his part to do, John gave witness in order to draw all men to the Light; if some did not believe, he is not to blame. The sun rises each day for the purpose of giving light to all. If a man shuts himself up in a gloomy dwelling and does not enjoy the sun's rays, is the sun at fault? So it is here. John was sent so that all might believe. It is not his fault that it turned out otherwise.

8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. It often occurs that the man who gives testimony is greater than the one of whom he testifies. Therefore, to prevent the evil thought that John, in bearing witness to Christ, was greater than Christ, the Evangelist says, He was not that Light. But could we not call John, or any one of the saints, a light? Yes, we may call every saint a light. But we cannot call them the Light, with the definite article. If someone says to you, "Surely John is a light?" agree with him. But if he says, "Surely John is the Light," say no. For he is not the very Light Itself, but a light by participation, which derives its brightness from the true Light.

9. He was the true Light, Which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. The Evangelist is about to speak of the divine economy of the Incarnation of the Only-begotten, Who came unto His own and became flesh. So that no one would think that the Word did not exist before He took flesh, the Evangelist leads our mind upwards to that existence which is beyond every beginning, and says, "He was, even before He took flesh, the

true Light." By this means he refutes the heresy of Photinus and Paul of Samosata, who taught that the Word began to exist when He was born of Mary, and before this, was not. And you also, O Arian, who say that the Son of God is not true God, listen to what the Evangelist calls Him: the true Light. And you, O Manichee, who say that we are the creations of an evil demiurge, listen: the true Light …enlighteneth every man. If the evil demiurge is darkness, how could he enlighten anyone? Therefore, we are the creations of the true Light. How, you might ask, can He enlighten every man, when we see some who are in darkness? As far as it is His part to do, He enlightens all. Tell me, are we not all endowed with reason? Do we not all by nature know right from wrong? Do we not all have the power to comprehend the Creator from His creation? Therefore, the logos which has been given to us, which teaches us by nature and which is also called the natural law, may be called "light" which is given to us by God. If some make poor use of this logos, they darken themselves. But some have answered the question in this manner: the Lord enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. That is to say, He enlightens those who have come to a better condition, and who strive to put in order and adorn their own soul and not to leave it disordered and ugly. (4)

10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He was in the world, being God, Who is everywhere present. It may also be said that He is in the world, because of His providence, care, and sustenance of the world. "But I should not stop at saying that He was in the world," declares the Evangelist, "when the world would not even exist if He Himself had not made it." At every point the Evangelist shows the Word to be the Creator. Thus he dispels the ravings of the Manichee, who claims that an evil demiurge produced the universe; he refutes the Arian, who says that the Son of God is Himself a created thing; and at the same time he leads all men to confess the Maker, and to worship the Creator, not created things. The Evangelist says, And the world knew Him not, meaning, the spiritually coarse people who are attached to the things of this world. World means, first of all, the whole universe, as in the line above, the world was made by Him. It also means those who think in a worldly manner, as it does here when he says, And the world knew Him not, that is to say, earthly men knew Him not, for all the saints and the prophets perceived who He was.

11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Here the Evangelist clearly begins his account of the divine economy of the Incarnation. The whole thread of what he says is this: the true Light was already in the world without flesh, and was not recognized. Then He came in the flesh unto His own. By His own you may understand either the whole world, or the Jews, whom He had chosen as the line of His inheritance, His portion, and His own possession. And His own received Him not, neither the Jews, nor the rest of mankind, who had been created by Him. Here the Evangelist bewails man's madness, and marvels at the Master's love for mankind. Although they are His very own, not all received Him. For the Lord draws no one to Himself by force, but by a man's own will and choice.

12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe in His name. Whether slaves or free, children or elders, barbarians or Greeks, as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God. Who were they who received Him? Those who believed in His name. Those who received the Word and the true Light received and accepted Him through faith. Why did the Evangelist not say that He made them sons of God, but instead that He gave them power to become sons of God? Listen, and I will tell you. To guard the purity of the soul and body, it is not enough to be baptized. We must also exercise much zeal and effort to preserve unspotted the image of adoption imprinted on us in Baptism. Therefore, many who have received the grace of adoption through Baptism were lazy and in the end did not become sons of God. One might add this as well, that many receive Him through faith alone, such as those whom we call the catechumens, but have not yet become sons of God. Yet they indeed have the power to become sons of God if they choose to be baptized and to be counted worthy of this grace, that is, adoption as sons. Furthermore, even if we receive the grace of adoption through Baptism, we will receive the completion and perfection of this grace only in the resurrection, and we hope to receive at that time the fullness of adoption. As Paul says, Even we are waiting for the adoption. [Rm. 8:23] For all these reasons, then, the Evangelist did not say, "As many as received Him, He made them sons of God," but instead, to them gave He power to become sons of God, that is, to receive this grace in the age to come.

13. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. He draws a comparison, as it were, between divine and human births, but he does so not to give us an unseemly reminder of the pangs of labor and delivery, but in order that we might recognize the ignoble and humble nature of fleshly childbirth and run towards divine grace. He says, Who were born, not of blood, that is, the blood in the womb of a woman, which nourishes and gives growth to the embryo. It is also said that the seed of the man first becomes blood, and then is formed into the flesh and the rest of the body of an infant. It was likely that some would say that believers in Christ are not born in a manner any different than that of Isaac. He, too, was not born of blood, for the blood in Sarah's womb had ceased to flow. Because some might think this, the Evangelist adds, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. Even if Isaac's birth was not of blood, it was of the will of man; undoubtedly the man desired that a child be born to him from Sarah. Nor are believers in Christ born of the will of the flesh, as Samuel was born from Anna. We might say, then, that Isaac was born of the will of man and Samuel was born of the will of the flesh, that is, of the will of a woman, Anna. For this barren woman had longed for a child. And perhaps both sons were born of both these desires. If you wish to learn something more, listen: intercourse of the flesh sometimes occurs as a result of a natural ardor. It often happens that one has a more fervent disposition and is more easily moved to intercourse (this is what the Evangelist calls the will of the flesh). Intercourse of the flesh also occurs as a result of evil inclinations and dissolute appetites, when the urge for intercourse is uncontrollable. This the Evangelist calls the will of a man, when intercourse does not result from physical nature, but from the depravity of a man. Because sometimes the woman is inclined to intercourse, and sometimes the man, perhaps by the will of a man he indicates the burning desire of the man, and by the will of the flesh he indicates the desire of the woman. All this has been said for the sake of those who ask foolish questions. To speak of what is essential, one idea is clear: the lowly nature of childbirth in the flesh. Now, the Israelites too were called "sons of God." What more have we who believe in Christ than the Israelites who believed in the law? More beyond compare. The law, in every point, contained only the foreshadowing of things to come, and therefore did not grant the Israelites adoption as sons as their actual

possession, but only in type and figure. But we who in truth have received the Spirit of God through Baptism cry out, Abba, Father. [Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6] Just as to them baptism was only a type and foreshadowing, so also their adoption as sons was a prefiguring of ours. They were called sons, but only as a foreshadowing of the true adoption as sons which we now have through Baptism.

14. And the Word was made flesh. Having said that we may become sons of God, if we so desire, by believing in Christ, here he adds the cause of such a great gift. The Evangelist is saying, "Do wish to learn what enabled us to be adopted as sons of God? It is this—that the Word was made flesh." When you hear He was made flesh, do not think that He abandoned His divine nature and was changed into flesh. He would not be God if He had been changed and altered. Instead, remaining what He was, He became what He was not. Here is where Apollinarius of Laodicea formed his heresy. He taught that our Lord and God did not assume the whole nature of a man, that is, a body and a rational soul, but took on flesh only, and not the rational and spiritual soul of a man. Christ God had no need of a human soul, he said, since His divine nature governed His human body, in the same manner as we have a soul which governs and moves our body. To support his argument, so he imagined, Appolinarius used these very words, And the Word was made flesh. He said, "The text does not say that He became man, but flesh. Therefore, Christ did not assume a human soul with mind and reason, but only flesh, without a human mind or reason." But was that pitiable man ignorant that Scripture often mentions the part for the whole? For example, when it refers to the whole man it often names him by one part only, the soul: "Let every soul which is not circumcised be put to death." [See Gen. 17:14.] Instead of saying, "Let every man," it mentions the part, namely, the soul. In another example, Scripture names the whole from the part, in this case, the flesh, when it says, And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. [Is. 40:5] Here "all flesh" means "every man." In exactly the same manner here, instead of saying, "The Word became man," the Evangelist says, The Word was made flesh, naming the man, composed of both body and soul, by one part only. Because flesh is alien to the divine nature, perhaps the Evangelist used the word flesh to show the boundless condescension of God, Who astounds us by His ineffable love for man, in that, for our salvation, He took upon Himself something that was

completely alien and foreign to His divine nature, namely, our flesh. Our soul has some kinship with God, but flesh shares nothing whatsoever with the divine. Therefore I think that the Evangelist here uses only the word flesh, not because the soul had no part in what was assumed, but as a stronger indication of the marvelous and fearful mystery of the Incarnation. If the Word had not assumed a human soul when He took flesh, our souls would still remain unhealed. For what He did not assume, He did not sanctify. The soul was the first to fall, for it was the soul which first succumbed to the words of the serpent and was deceived in Paradise, and then the hand, following after its lady and mistress, reached out to touch. How laughable it is, then, to suppose that the handmaid, the flesh, should be assumed, sanctified, and healed, while the mistress, the soul, should be left unassumed and unhealed. Away with Appolinarius! When we hear that the Word was made flesh, we believe that He became perfect man, for Scripture habitually uses either "body" or "soul" to refer to the whole man. Nestorius is also refuted by these words. He claimed that God the Word Himself did not become that Man which was conceived from the most holy blood of the Virgin, but instead, that the Virgin gave birth to a man. To this man, filled with grace and with all virtue, was joined the Word of God, giving him power over unclean spirits. Thus Nestorius taught that there were two sons: one, the man Jesus, born of the Virgin, and the other, the Son of God, joined to the man and inseparable from him, but "inseparable" only by grace, by closeness, and by love, because he was a virtuous man. Teaching these things, Nestorius chose to be deaf to the truth. For if he had so desired, he would have heard this blessed Evangelist say, The Word was made flesh. Is Nestorius not clearly refuted here? The Word Himself became man. The Evangelist did not say that the Word found a man and was joined to him, but He Himself became a man. Eutyches, Valentinus, and Manes are also here rebutted. They taught that the Word of God appeared in semblance only. Let them hear also that the Word was made flesh. The Evangelist did not say that the Word appeared to be flesh, or was imagined to be flesh, but that He became flesh in truth and in essence, not by phantasy. It is foolish and absurd to believe that the Son of God, Who is Truth and is called Truth, would have made a lie of His Incarnation. For what is phantasy, if not a false appearance?

And dwelt in us. He had said above that the Word became flesh. Now, lest anyone imagine that Christ became one nature, he adds the words, and dwelt in us, to show us two natures: our own and that of the Word. A tent has a certain nature; he who dwells in a tent has another. (5) In the same way, the Word dwells in us, that is to say, in our nature, though His nature is different than ours. Let the Armenians [i.e. Monophysites] be put to shame who claim that Christ has one nature. From the words, The Word became flesh, we learn that the Word Himself became man, and, while being the Son of God, also became the Son of a woman who is called the Theotokos, God's Birthgiver, precisely because she gave birth to God in the flesh. From the words, He dwelt in us, we learn to believe the two natures in one Christ. Though He is one in hypostasis, that is to say, in person, He is two in nature, both God and man. The divine and human natures could not have become one unless they had appeared in One, that is, in Christ.

And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Because he had said, The Word became flesh, here he adds, and we beheld His glory, that is to say, "While He was in the flesh, we beheld His glory." The Israelites had been unable to look upon the face of Moses when it shone with glory after he spoke with God. [See Ex. 34:29-35.] Could the Apostles possibly have been able to endure the full divinity of the Only-begotten, had it not been revealed to them through the veil of the flesh? We beheld His glory, but not such glory as Moses' face reflected, nor as the glory in which the cherubim and seraphim appeared to the prophet [Ezek. 10:4], but such glory as befits the Only-begotten Son of the Father, and belonging to Him by nature. Here, the word as does not express similarity [i.e. glory similar to that of the Only-begotten], but, instead, certain and unambiguous identity. When we see a king approaching in great glory, we say, "He approached as king," meaning, "He approached being in truth the king." So too, here, we should understand as of the Only-begotten to mean, "The glory which we beheld was the glory of Him Who is in truth the Son of God." Full of grace and truth. He was full of grace, inasmuch as even His speech was gracious, as David says, Grace hath been poured forth on Thy lips. [Ps. 44:2] And the Evangelist Luke records, They all marvelled at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth. [Lk. 4:22] Furthermore, He graciously bestowed healings on all those in need of them. He was also full of truth. All that was spoken or done by the prophets, even

by Moses himself, was only a foreshadowing of the truth. But all that Christ said and did is full of truth, for Christ Himself is Grace and Truth, and He bestowed these things on others. Where did they behold His glory? Perhaps some will think that the disciples did so on Mount Tabor when He was transfigured. This is true, but not on the mountain only, but in everything that the Lord spoke and did, they beheld His glory.

15. John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of Whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. The Evangelist often cites the testimony of John, not because the words of a servant would give credibility to the Master, but because the people held John in such high regard that they would trust his testimony more than that of any other. By saying that John cried, he shows that John did not witness timidly in a corner, but shouted out with great boldness concerning Christ. What did he say? This was He of Whom I spake. John gave witness to Christ even before he saw Him. This was certainly by the will of God, so that John's good testimony of Christ would not appear biased and partial to Christ. This is why John said, He of Whom I spake, that is, even before he had seen Christ, He that cometh after me, meaning, who was born after I was, for the Forerunner preceded Christ in birth by six months, is preferred before me, that is, has become more highly honored and more glorious than I. Why? Because He was before me in His divinity. The Arians have interpreted these words in a foolish manner. They want to show that the Son of God was not begotten of Father, but was made as one of His creatures. Therefore they say, "Look! John bears witness to Christ, saying, 'He came into being before me,' meaning that He was born before me and was created by God as one of His works." (6) Their wrong interpretation is refuted by the words which follow. For what meaning is revealed by saying, "He, Christ, came into being before me," meaning, He was created before me, "because He was before me"? It is utterly foolish to say, "God created Him first because He was before me." It ought to say just the opposite, "He is before me because He came into being, was created, before me." So much for the Arians. But we, in Orthodox manner, understand that He that cometh after me in His birth in the flesh from the Virgin is preferred before me, meaning, has become more highly honored and more glorious than I because of the miracles that took place, because of His Birth, His upbringing, and His wisdom. And rightly so, for He was before me

according to His begetting from the Father from before the ages, even though He came after me according to His advent in the flesh.

16. And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. These are the words of the Forerunner continuing to speak of Christ, "All we prophets have received of His fulness." For there is no greater grace than that which filled these Spirit-bearing men. As the source of every good thing, of all wisdom and prophecy, [God the Word] pours out these things on all who are worthy, while He Himself remains full and is never emptied. We have received grace, that is, the grace of the New Testament, for grace, that of the old lawgiving. (7) Because the Old Testament has grown old and weak, in place of it we have received the New. How, one might ask, could he name the Old Testament "grace"? Because the Jews also by grace were adopted and accepted as sons. For it is said, "Not because you are numerous, but for the sake of your fathers have I chosen you." [Dt. 7:7-8] The ancients, then, by grace were accepted, and we, most assuredly, by grace have been saved.

17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The Evangelist explains to us how we have received the greatest grace in place of a small grace, saying that the law was given byMoses, God using a human mediator. But the New Testament came byJesus Christ, which he calls both grace and truth: grace, because God graciously bestowed on us not only forgiveness of sins but adoption as sons; truth, because everything which the men of old saw and spoke only in type, the New Testament proclaimed in radiant clarity. Therefore, the New Testament, which is called grace and truth, had no mere man as mediator, but the Son of God. See how he said of the Old Testament that it was given by Moses, for Moses was a minister and servant. But of the New Testament he said, not that it "was given," but that it came, showing that by our Lord Jesus Christ as Master, not servant, it came into being, revealing grace and truth. The law was given through the mediation of Moses, but grace came, and was not given, through Jesus Christ. The word came [egeneto] is a mark of the master’s authority; was given [edoth] is a mark of a servant. (8)

1. all’ o kyrisLogos ousia tis estin enypostatos.

2. Literally, adversaries of the Spirit, also called Macedonians after their leader, Macedonius, who taught in an Arian manner that the Holy Spirit was a ministering creature, not of one essence with the Father and the Son. This heresy was condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 381 A.D.

3. Notice that Bl. Theophylact has here given three different readings for the same unpunctuated words in the original Greek text. The first and third readings are Orthodox; the second is heretical. Concerning the absence in ancient texts of modern punctuation and verse numbering, and its significance for the proper, that is, Orthodox, interpretation of Scripture, see footnote 11 on p.175 of Vol. 3, The Explanation of St. Luke.

4. The Greek word kosmos, world, has the literal meaning of "good order" and "adornment."

5. The Greek verb esknse, translated in the text of the Gospel as dwelt, comes from the noun skn, meaning tent, or tabernacle. This verb has a special meaning in Scripture, indicating the presence and dwelling place of God Himself, first of all in the moveable temple constructed by God's command by the Israelites during the forty years in the wilderness. By the revelation of the New Covenant the prototype of this earthly tabernacle is shown to be heaven itself, the true tabernacle. (Heb. 8:2) When the Word became flesh and God made His dwelling in our human nature, truly heaven was opened to us, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 4:17) and within you. (Lk. 17:21)

6. Outos emprosthen mou gegonen. He is preferred before me. The verb gegone, present perfect of ginomai, can mean "came into being, became (in regards to quality or rank), was born, is." The Church interprets this to mean, "He is before me in rank." The Arians interpret the same words to mean, "He came into being," that is, was created, "before me."

7. charin anti charitos, grace for grace. anti means "instead of, in place of," indicating exchange or succession. This phrase might better be translated, "grace instead of grace."

8. charis kai altheia dia Isou Christou egeneto, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Compare this to verse 10 above, o kosmos dia autou egeneto, the world was made by Him.

The Second Sunday of Pascha
Thomas Sunday
John 20:19-31

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

19–23. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. When Mary Magdalene brought her news to the disciples, it is likely that they reacted in one of two ways: either they did not believe her, or, if they did, they were crestfallen because they were not deemed worthy to see Christ. Meanwhile, *fear of the Jews* was increasing the disciples' longing to see the only One Who could relieve their anxiety. And so the Lord appeared to them that very evening, when all of them were gathered together. It is written that He appeared *when the doors were shut*, meaning, He entered through locked doors. This was to show that He had risen in the very same manner, while the entrance to the tomb was shut with a stone. One would think they might have taken Him for a ghost, but Mary Magdalene's testimony had greatly strengthened their faith. Also, He manifested Himself in such a way as to calm their tumultuous thoughts: *Peace be unto you*, He said gently, meaning, "Be not afraid." This was to remind them of what He had told them before the crucifixion: *My peace I give unto you* (Jn. 14:27). *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* This, too, He had foretold before His death: *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice* (Jn. 16:22). It was well that He should *say to them again, Peace*, for the disciples were now engaged in desperate struggle with the Jews. As He had said, *Rejoice!* to the women

(Mt. 28:9), because sorrows were their lot, so He grants peace to the disciples, who were now, and would always be, at war with the Jews.

It is fitting that He grants joy to the women, condemned to bear children in pain and suffering; and peace to the men, on account of the warfare that would engulf them for preaching the Gospel. At the same time He reveals that the cross has ushered in peace: "The cross has brought peace: now I send you forth to proclaim it." To strengthen and embolden the disciples, He declares, "*As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.* It is My work you have undertaken, so do it boldly: I will be with you." Behold the authority of his command: "It is I Who sends you (Εγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς)." No longer does He condescend to the limitations of their understanding, saying as He often did before the resurrection, "I will ask My Father and He will send you." Now He breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit—but not the entirety of the gift He would bestow at Pentecost. *Receive ye the Holy Spirit*, means, "Let this partial bestowal of grace make you ready to receive later the fullness of the Holy Spirit." The words, *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them*, indicate the particular gift He gives the disciples now: power to forgive sins. Later, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit Himself would descend in all His might, lavishing upon the apostles every spiritual gift and power to work wondrous deeds, such as raising the dead.

It is worth considering why John records only that Christ appeared to His disciples in Jerusalem, while Matthew and Mark say that He promised to appear to them in Galilee (see Mt. 26:32; Mk. 14:28). Some have explained it this way: "Christ never said He would appear to the disciples only in Galilee, and not in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, He appeared to the twelve, whereas in Galilee, He appeared to all His disciples, in accordance with His promise. The fact that He showed Himself many times to the twelve indicates that He honored them more highly than the others." From this we again see that there are no irreconcilable disagreements between the accounts of the Evangelists. There were many appearances of the Lord after His resurrection, and each Evangelist selected certain ones to record. When two Evangelists describe the same event, the second usually tells what the first has omitted. And now, O reader, reflect upon the divine rank of the priesthood. The power to forgive sins is a divine power; hence, we must show honor to the priests as to God. Even if they are unworthy, they are still

ministers of divine gifts, and grace empowers them (ἐνεργεῖ δι΄αὐτῶν) just as it empowered Balaam's ass, enabling it to speak (see Num. 22:28-30). Human frailty does not hinder the working of grace. Therefore, since grace is bestowed through the priests, let us honor them.

24–29. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and My God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. *Thomas … was not with* the disciples, perhaps because he had not yet returned from where he was hiding after the disciples had scattered. Elsewhere, we learned that the Hebrew name "Cephas" means "Rock" (Πέτρος, see Jn. 1:42); here we are told that "Thomas" means "Twin" (Δίδυμος). The Evangelist provides the meaning of the name here to indicate that Thomas was prone to be of two minds—a doubter by nature. He doubted the news brought to him by the others, not because he thought they were liars, but because he considered it impossible for a man to rise from the dead. And his doubt made him excessively inquisitive. Gullibility is a sign of light-mindedness; but stubborn resistance to truth is a sure indication of thick-headedness. Thomas would not even trust his eyes, but demanded proof by touch, the least discriminating of the senses: *except I shall … thrust my hand into His side.* How did Thomas know there were wounds in Christ's hands and side? Because the other disciples had told him. And why does the Lord wait eight days before appearing to him? To allow time for each of Thomas' fellow disciples to tell him what they had witnessed. Hearing the same story from each one individually made him more willing to believe, and increased his desire to see the Lord. In order to show that He was invisibly present eight

days earlier, when Thomas had expressed disbelief, the Lord does not wait for Thomas to speak. Instead, He straightway proposes exactly what Thomas desired, quoting his very words.

First He rebukes Thomas, saying, *Reach hither thy hand*; then He admonishes him: *and be not faithless, but believing*. From this it is clear that Thomas' doubt was caused by lack of faith, and not because he was careful to verify the facts (as some say, wishing to put him in better light). But as soon as Thomas touched the Lord's side, he was revealed as a superb theologian, proclaiming the two natures and single hypostasis of the one Christ. Thomas refers to the human nature of Christ, calling Him *Lord*; for the term "Lord" (Κύριος) is applied not just to God, but to men as well. (Thinking that Jesus was the gardener, Mary Magdalene had said to Him, *Sir* (Κύριε), *if thou have borne Him hence*… (v. 15). But when Thomas cries out, …*and My God*, he confesses Christ's divine essence, and affirms that the names *Lord* and *God* refer to one and the same Person. By declaring blessed those who have not seen, and yet have believed, the Lord teaches us that faith means the acceptance of things not seen. He is referring, first to the disciples who believed without touching His side or the print of the nails, and second to those who would later believe (without any physical confirmation). He is not depriving Thomas of his share of blessedness, but encouraging all who have not seen. There was a common saying, "Blessed are the eyes that have seen the Lord." Christ, however, praises those who will believe without seeing, declaring them to be truly blessed.

A question arises: how can an incorruptible body display the mark of nails and be touched by human hands? The answer is that such things are possible as part of the divine economia: they are manifestations of God's condescension and love for man. By entering the room when the doors were shut, Christ makes it absolutely clear that after the resurrection His body is altered: it is now light and subtle, free of all material coarseness. But to confirm that it is indeed their Lord and Master Who has appeared to them, He permits His resurrected body, bearing the wounds of the crucifixion, to be touched. For the same reason, when He walked on the water before the Passion (see Mk. 6:48]), His body was unchanged from when He was walking about on land, and this reassured the disciples. But though He allows His resurrected body to be touched, it is now impassible and

incorruptible. When Christ eats now with the disciples, it is no longer to satisfy any physical demands of His body (for there were none). Food once eaten is altered in the stomach and passes out into the drain (see Mt. 15:17). But it was not so with Christ after the resurrection. The food He ate during that time was consumed by an invisible, divine power. His only purpose in eating was to confirm the reality of His resurrection, and He permitted His incorruptible body to bear the mark of nails, and to be handled, for the same reason. Do you see, O reader, how, in order to save one doubting soul, the Lord did not spare His own dignity, but condescended to bare His side? Neither should we despise even the least of our brethren.

30–31. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. To what other signs is the Evangelist referring? To those that Jesus did after the resurrection, and not those before His crucifixion, as one might suppose. The Evangelist is speaking about the signs which Jesus did in the presence of His disciples only. The miracles before the Passion were performed in the presence of the multitude and revealed Jesus to all as the Son of God. The miracles after the resurrection were performed while He was alone with the disciples during the forty days: their purpose was to convince them that He was still the Son of man, with a human body, albeit one now incorruptible, more Godlike, and no longer subject to the laws of the flesh. Of the many miracles after the resurrection, only these are written. They are not described ostentatiously, to vaunt the glory of the Only-begotten, but simply, as the Evangelist says —that ye might believe. So what is the profit here, and to whom does it accrue? Certainly not to Christ, for what does He gain by our belief? It is we who gain. The Evangelist himself tells us that he wrote so that believing ye might have life through Jesus' name. When we believe that Jesus rose from dead and lives, we win for ourselves eternal life. He arose, and is alive, for our sake. But whoever imagines that Christ is dead and did not rise from the grave has no life in him. Indeed, by thinking this he confirms and ensures his own eternal death and corruption.

Third Sunday of Pascha

The Myrrh-bearing Women
Mark 15:43-16:6
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Mark
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

42-47. Now when the evening was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a noble counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and asked for the Body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the Body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Himdown, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Himin a tomb which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid. While yet a servant of the law, the blessed Joseph recognized Christ as God, and this is why he dared to do such a praiseworthy deed of courage. He did not stop to think to himself, "I am a wealthy man, and I will lose my wealth if I ask for the body of one condemned by the rulers authority, and I will be slandered by the Jews." No such thoughts did he harbor, but placing all other considerations second, he begged to bury the Body of the One condemned. Pilate wondered if He were already dead, for Pilate thought that Jesus would endure on the cross for a long time, as did the thieves. So he asked the centurion if Jesus had already died some time before. Joseph then took the Body, having bought linen, and when he had taken It down from the cross he wrapped It in the linen, and buried reverently that which was worthy of all reverence. For Joseph too was a disciple of Christ, and he knew that it was necessary to honor the Master. He was noble, that is, devout, pious, and blameless. And he held the rank of counsellor, a title which conferred duties of public service and responsibility; the counsellors supervised the affairs of the marketplace, and danger often befell one holding this position because of the evildoings in the market. Let the wealthy, and those engaged in public business, heed that Josephs high rank in no way hindered him from living a virtuous life. Joseph means "increase," and Arimathea means "taking hold of that." Let us be like Joseph, always increasing in virtue, and taking hold of that which is truly

good. Let us also take the Body of Jesus, through Holy Communion, and place It in a tomb hewn out of a rock, that is, place It within a soul which always remembers God and does not forget Him. (1)

And let that soul be hewn from a rock, that is, from Christ Who is the Rock on which we are established. Let us wrap the Body of Jesus in the linen, that is, let us receive It within a pure body. For the body is the linen and the garment of the soul. We must receive the divine Body of the Lord not only with a pure soul, but with a pure body as well. And we must wrap It and enfold It within ourselves, and not leave It exposed. For this Mystery is something veiled and hidden, not something to be exposed.

16:1-8. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the tomb at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the tomb; for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. The women had no understanding of Christs divinity while they sat by the tomb, and they bought myrrh with which to anoint His Body in accordance with the Jewish practice, so that It would remain fragrant and not begin to have the foul odor of decay. Myrrh also dries things out, and thus it absorbs the moisture of the body and preserves it from corruption. Thinking such thoughts as these, the women rose and came to the tomb very early in the morning, or, as Matthew says, after the sabbath, or, as Luke says, at early dawn." [Mt. 28:1; Lk. 24:1] All four Evangelists say, On the first of the sabbath [mias Sabbaton], meaning, on the first day of the week (for "sabbath" was also the name they gave to the seven days of the week considered together, so that

the "first day of the sabbath" meant Sunday). As the women approached the tomb, they talked among themselves about who would roll away the stone. While they were thinking about this, the angel rolled away the stone without their noticing. Matthew says that the angel rolled away the stone after the women had come to the tomb [Mt. 28:2] On this point Mark is silent, because Matthew had already said who rolled away the stone. Do not be troubled that Matthew says that the angel was sitting on the stone, while Mark says that after they entered the tomb, the women saw the angel sitting on the right side. It is likely that they first saw the angel sitting on the stone outside the tomb, as Matthew says, and that he then went before them into the tomb, where they saw him again. Some say that the women mentioned by Matthew were not the same ones mentioned here by Mark. Mary Magdalene, however, was with all of them, as she was fervent and aflame with zeal. The angel who appeared to the women said, Be not affrighted. First he takes away their fear, and then he announces to them the good tidings of the Resurrection. He calls Jesus "the Crucified", for the angel was not ashamed of the Cross, which is the salvation of mankind and the beginning of good things. He is risen. How do we know this? Because He is not here. Do you want further assurance? Behold the place where they laid Him. This is why the angel had moved away the stone—to show them the place. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter. He names Peter separately from the other disciples, as Peter was the foremost of the apostles. Also, because Peter had denied the Lord, the angel singles him out by name so that, when the women came and said that the Lord had commanded them to tell the disciples, Peter could not say, "I denied the Lord, and therefore I am no longer His disciple. He has rejected me and abhors me." The angel added the words and Peter, so that Peter would not be tempted to think that Jesus found him unworthy of mention, and unworthy to be ranked among the Lords disciples, because of his denial. He sends them [out of Judea] into Galilee, delivering them from tumult and from their great fear of the Jews. Fear and amazement had taken hold of the women at the sight of the angel and at the awesome mystery of the Resurrection, and because of this neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." Either they were afraid of the Jews, or they were so in awe of what they had seen that their minds were confounded. For this reason neither said they any thing to any man, and they even forgot the command the angel had given them.

1. The Greek word for "tomb," mnemeion, is derived from the word mneme, which means "memory."

Fourth Sunday of Pascha

Healing of the Paralytic
John 5:1-15
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-4. After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. It was a feast of the Jews, Pentecost, I believe. The Lord went up on this feast for two reasons: first, so as not to appear by His absence to be opposed to the law, but to be seen celebrating together with the others. Secondly, He went up to the feast to draw more people to Himself by His signs and teaching, especially from among the guileless multitude. For the farmers and craftsmen, who on other days would be busy at their work, always gathered together on the feast days. The pool was called Sheep's Pool, because the sheep intended for sacrifice were gathered there, and after they were slain their entrails were washed in its water. It was the common belief that simply from the washing of the sacrificial entrails the water took on a divine power, and because of this, the angel would come to it at certain times to work a miracle. Here we see divine providence guiding the Jews from the beginning towards faith in Christ, preordaining for them this miracle of the pool. In these Judaic beliefs and practices God prefigured Baptism, which would contain great power and the gifts of cleansing sins and bringing souls to life. He had already given them water for the cleansing of stains, not of the fundamental stain, but those which appeared as such before [the New Covenant], such as the stain of touching a corpse, a leper, and so forth. Then He gave them this miracle of the pool, preparing them to receive Baptism. An angel would come down at certain times and trouble the water, infusing it with healing power. Truly, it is not the nature of water to heal by itself (if this were so it would invariably heal); it is entirely through the activity of the angel that the miracle was accomplished. So it is with us that the water of Baptism is simple water, which, through the invocations made

to God, receives the grace of the Holy Spirit to free us from spiritual disease. And this water heals all: the blind, whose spiritual eyes are darkened and unable to discern the better from the worse; the lame, who can neither move towards doing good, nor even advance towards what is better; the withered, who are in total despair, and have no part in anything good. All are healed by the water of Baptism. Before, our very weakness had prevented us from being healed, but now there is no hindrance to our being baptized. In the waters of that pool just one was healed, while the others remained sick; now, even if the whole world should approach at once for Baptism, the grace would not diminish.

5-7. And a certain man was there, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. The perseverence of the paralytic is astounding. For thirty-eight years he lay there waiting, each year hoping to be healed, but always prevented by those who were stronger. Yet he neither gave up, nor despaired. This is why the Lord questioned him, in order to show us the steadfastness of the man, and not of course because He was ignorant of the answer. Not only was it unnecessary for Him to learn the answer, it would have been foolish for anyone to ask such a question, whether a sick man wanted to be healed. The Lord spoke as He did only to bring to our attention the patience of the man. How does he answer? With great kindness and gentleness. "Yea, Lord, I wish to be healed, but I have no man who is able to carry me into the water." He does not answer with blasphemy; he does not rebuke Christ for asking a stupid question; he does not curse the day of his birth as we often do, fainthearted as we are, when undergoing a much lesser affliction than his. He answers meekly and pleadingly, indeed not knowing to Whom he was speaking, and also intending perhaps to ask Christ to carry him into the water. Note also that Christ did not say, "Wilt thou that I make thee whole?" lest He appear to boast.

8-10. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that

was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He commands him to pick up his bed in order to confirm that the miracle was not an illusion, for the man would not have been able to carry his bed if his limbs were not firmly and solidly knit together. The Lord does not require faith of him before the healing, as He did with many others, for the paralytic had never seen Him work any signs. And of the others of whom the Lord did require faith, it was not before but after He had performed miracles in their presence. See how the paralytic immediately heard and believed the Lord's command. He did not hesitate and say to himself, "Is he not mad to command me to get up at once? I have been here thirty-eight years without ever being healed, and now I should suddenly stand up?" With no such thought, he believed, and rose. The Lord heals on the Sabbath, teaching men to understand the observance of the law in a new way, that they should not think that it is by bodily rest that they honor the Sabbath, but by refraining from evil. How could the law forbid one from doing good on the Sabbath when the law comes from God, Who is always doing good?

11-13. He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed knew not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place. One must marvel at the boldness of the man towards the Jews. While they badgered him, saying, "It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed on the Sabbath," he boldly proclaimed his Benefactor, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. It is as if he were saying, "It is nonsense to forbid me to obey the man who saved me from such a long, hard sickness." The Jews do not ask him, "Who is it that made thee whole?" but, "Who is it that said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?" It is as if they chose to be blind to the good, but were obsessed by what they considered to be a transgression of the Sabbath. Jesus conveyed Himself away so that the man's testimony to his healing would be evidence of the truth, and not liable to the accusation that he was attempting to curry favor with Jesus by crediting Him with the miracle. [For not only did the man not know who Jesus was, but] Jesus Himself was no longer present on the scene. Jesus left that place for another reason as well, to avoid arousing the Jews to further anger. He knew that the mere sight of the object of envy is enough to ignite a flame of spite. Therefore, He allows the facts of the

matter to be examined entirely on their own merit. And the more the Jews accuse, interrogate and examine, the more swiftly travels word of the miracle.

14-16. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day. By the Lord's words to the paralytic, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, we learn first of all that illness in man stems from sin. Secondly, we learn that the Christian teaching about hell is true, and that the punishment there is eternal. Where are those now who say, "I fornicated for one hour; how [is it possible] that I will be punished eternally?" Behold this man, whose years of sin were far fewer than his years of punishment, seeing that his punishment lasted almost the length of a man's life. For sins are not judged by their duration in time but by the nature of the transgression. We also learn from the Lord's words that even if we have paid a harsh penalty for our former sins, and then return again to those same sins, we will be punished more severely than before. Indeed, this is only right. If a man does not correct his ways after his first punishment, he must be treated more severely, because he is insensible to the good and scorns it. But why are not all punished in this manner? We see that many of the wicked are healthy and energetic, and pass their days happily. But their lack of sufferings in this life becomes the grounds for even greater punishment in the next life. Saint Paul makes this clear when he writes, But when we are judged by the Lord, meaning, in this life, we are chastened, that we should not be condemned with the world, that is, in the next life. [I Cor. 11-32] What we receive in this life are only admonitions: in the next life they are truly punishments. So then, are all illnesses the result of sin? Not all, but most. Some illnesses arise from sin, as we see with the paralytic and also with one of the kings of Judah, who suffered pain in his legs as a result of sin; [III Kings 15:23] other illnesses are given as a testing and proving of virtue, as with Job; yet other sicknesses result from overindulgence of various kinds, such as gluttony and drunkenness. Some have supposed that His words, Sin no more, indicate that the Lord knew that the paralytic would reveal Him to the Jews after He met him in the temple. But this is not so. It is apparent

that the man was pious, for the Evangelist says, Jesus findeth him in the temple. If he had not been pious, he would have given himself over to relaxation and eating and drinking, and run home to escape the ravings and questioning of the Jews. But none of these things dissuaded him from going to the temple. After recognizing Jesus, see how gratefully he proclaims him to the Jews. He did not say the words they wanted to hear, "It is Jesus Who told me to take up my bed," but instead, "It is Jesus Who made me whole." These grateful words infuriated them, for they held the breaking of the Sabbath to be a crime. If the Jews then persecuted the Lord, how was the man at fault by revealing Him to them? With sincere motives he proclaimed his Healer to them in order to draw others to believe in Him. If they persecuted the One Who did good things, it is their own sin. Understand the sheep's pool to represent the grace of Baptism, in which the Sheep sacrificed for us, the Lord Jesus, was washed when He was baptized for our sake. This pool has five porches, symbolizing the four great virtues plus the divine contemplation of dogma which are revealed in Baptism. Human nature, paralyzed in all its spiritual powers, lay sick for thirty-eight years. It was not sound in its belief in the Holy Trinity [i.e. 3], nor did it have a sure belief in the eighth age [i.e. 8], that is, the general Resurrection and the Last Judgement. This is why it could not find healing, for it did not have any man to put it into the pool. That is to say, the Son of God, Who intended to heal through Baptism, had not yet been made man. But when He was made man, then He healed our nature and commanded us to take up our bed, that is, lift up our body from the earth, making it light and free, not weighted down by flesh and earthly cares, and raising it from slothfulness so that it is able to walk, which means, active in doing good. The troubling of the water in the pool suggests the stirring up the evil spirits lurking in the waters of Baptism, crushing and choking them by the grace of the Holy Spirit. May we also obtain healing, for we are paralyzed and motionless in the doing of anything good; we also have no man, that is, no human and rational thought, which distinguishes us from the irrational beasts, to carry us into the pool of tears of repentance, in which the first who enters is healed. He who procrastinates and puts off his repentance until later, and does not hurry to repent now, does not obtain healing. Hasten to be the first to enter this pool, lest death overtake you. And there is an angel which troubles this pool of repentance. What angel is it? The Angel of Great Counsel of the Father, Christ the Saviour. [See Is. 9:6] For unless the divine Word touches

our heart and troubles it with thought of the torments of the age to come, this pool cannot become active and effective, and there is no healing for the paralyzed soul. The pool of repentance may also fittingly be called a sheep's pool; for in it are washed like sheep the inward parts and thoughts of the saints who are made ready to become a living sacrifice pleasing to God, making them innocent and guileless. May we also obtain healing, and afterwards be found in God's holy temple, no longer stained by unholy thoughts, lest a worse thing, the eternal torments, come unto us.

Fifth Sunday of Pascha

The Samaritan Woman
John 4: 5-42
From The Explanation of The Gospel of St. John
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-4. When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples,) He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And it was necessary that He go through Samaria. When God, the Lover of man, became flesh for our sake, the purpose of His every action was to bring benefit to us. So it is here: when He perceived that the Pharisees had heard of His fame and knew that this would incite them to envy, He departed into Galilee, thereby teaching us two things. First, that we should spare our enemies and try every means not to give cause for offense or envy; and second, that we should not throw ourselves into temptation foolishly and needlessly, but instead withdraw for a while until the anger of our enemies has abated. Although He had the power to withstand those who hated Him, even if they had rushed to attack, yet He withdrew from them so that His human nature and flesh would not seem to be an illusion. If He had continuously escaped from their midst, how much scope would this have given to the Docetists, the Manichees, Valentine, and the accursed Eutyches [heretics who denied the fulness of Christ's human nature]? The Evangelist alludes to the slander induced by envy when he says, "Though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, He was falsely accused of baptizing by envious men who wished to stir up the Pharisees against Him." It was necessary that He go through Samaria. The Evangelist describes Samaria as place to pass through, not a destination. Note that he did not say, "It was necessary that He go to Samaria." He wished to forestall any accusation by the Jews that Christ left them in order to go to the Gentiles, whom the Jews abhorred. It was only when the Jews drove Him away that the Lord approached the Gentiles; and even then, He did not go to them on purpose, but only in passing.

5-6. Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. It would be worthwhile to explain the origins of the Samaritans

and how they got their name. There was a mountain, Somor, named after the man who owned it, as Isaiah also says, And the head of Ephraim is Somoron.[Is. 7:9] Those who lived by this mountain were not at first called Samaritans, but Israelites. When they sinned against God, they were given into the hands of the Assyrians on various occasions.[See IV King 17:6-7} At last the Assyrian king [Tiglath-pileser III] set upon them as they were plotting a rebellion, took them captive, and fearing continuous revolt, no longer permitted them to remain there. He exiled them among the Babylonians and Medes, and from there brought back Gentiles from various places and settled them in Samaria. After this was done, God demonstrated to the barbarians that He had given the Jews into their hands because the Jews had sinned, and not because He was weak. Therefore He caused lions to set upon the barbarians in Samaria and devour them. When this was reported to the king, he sent for certain elders of the Jews in captivity, and asked them what could be done to prevent the lions from again assailing the occupants of Samaria. The elders explained that the God of Israel watched over that place and would not allow any one ignorant of His laws to dwell there. Therefore, if he felt sorrow for those barbarians, he should send Jewish priests to teach them the laws of God, and in this manner God would be appeased. The king did as they had said, and sent a certain priest to teach the law of God to the barbarians in Samaria. However, they did not accept all the divine books, but only the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Neither did they completely abandon their impiety; but in later years they gave up their idols and worshiped God. When the Jews finally returned from captivity, they always were suspicious of the Samaritans, considering them to be Assyrian by race, and calling them "Samaritans" after the name of the mountain. But the Samaritans called themselves the descendants of Abraham and Jacob. For Abraham was a Chaldean like themselves, and Jacob they considered to be their own because of his well which they possessed. To the Jews, then, the Samaritans were an abomination, together with all Gentiles. This is why they reviled the Lord by saying, Thou art a Samaritan, [Jn. 8:48] and even the Lord Himself said to His disciples, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. [Mt. 10:5] Why does the Evangelist give such details about Jacob’s ground and well? First of all, so that you would not be surprised to hear the words of the woman, Our father, Jacob … gave us this well. For that place was Sykima [Shechem], where Simeon and Levi, the sons of

Jacob, committed their savage slaughter to avenge the ravishing of their sister, Dinah, by the son of the ruler of the Sykimites. [Gen. 34] We also learn from the Evangelist's mention of the ground and the well that the rejection of the Jews began long ago on account of their sins—having sinned against God, the Gentiles took possession of their land, and what the patriarchs had acquired through their faith in Christ, their descendants, the Jews, lost through their impiety. So it is nothing new if now the Gentiles have entered into the kingdom of heaven instead of the Jews. The ground which Jacob gave to Joseph was called Sykima. For it was there that the sons of Jacob slew the Sykimites and left desolate their city, which Jacob gave as an inheritance to his son, Joseph.

6-8. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink. For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy food. By saying that the Lord was weary from the journey, the Evangelist shows us His humility and simplicity, for He rode not even a donkey on His journey, but walked on foot, teaching us also to need less, not more. The Evangelist also demonstrates that the Lord did not journey leisurely, but with intensity, from which we too may learn to do God's work with zeal and attention. The words, He sat thus, indicate that He sat simply, as He was, not on a chair, and without pretension rested His body on the ground and refreshed it by the well. Then the Evangelist gives another reason why He sat by the well: it was high noon, about the sixth hour, and the Lord needed rest and refreshment from the oppressive heat. Lest anyone accuse the Lord of a double standard in forbidding His disciples to go near the Gentiles while He Himself went to the Samaritans, the Evangelist says that He sat in that place because He was tired, showing that his thirst justified His conversation with the woman. In accordance with His human nature, He became thirsty and needed to drink. To the One asking for drink, the woman speaks with words which show her eagerness to learn. What should He have done? Shun this woman so eager to learn, who thirsted to learn the answer to her perplexity? Of course not! That is not the way of God, the Lover of man. We also see here the utter simplicity of the Lord. He is left all alone on the road, while His disciples have gone into the city to buy food. They gave so little attention to the demand of the stomach that at the very time when most people are nearly asleep after

dinner they were out buying food, that is, loaves of bread only, from which we may also learn to limit the variety of what we eat. Notice the exactitude of the Evangelist. He did not assert, "It was the sixth hour," but instead, It was about the sixth hour, so careful was he to preserve the truthfulness of every word of his Gospel.

9-11. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water? Perhaps by His appearance, dress, manner, and speech, the Samaritan woman judged the Lord to be a Jew, which is why she says to Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew … ? See how circumspect she is. If there were need of caution, the Lord needed it, not her. For it was not that the Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews, but, as she says, that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. None the less, the woman did not keep silent, but out of her concern that the Lord was doing something unlawful for Him to do, she attempted to correct Him. The Lord does not show Who He is until the woman's virtue, prudence, and conscientiousness have first been revealed. Then He begins to speak to her of more profound things. If thou knewest, He says, the gift of God, which means, if you knew what eternal and incorruptible things God gives, and if you also knew that I am God, Who is able to give you these things, you would have asked for and received living water. The Lord calls the gift of the Holy Spirit water because it cleanses and refreshes those who receive it. It is not stagnant, fetid water like that in ponds and wells, but living water, ceaselessly bubbling and gushing upwards. For the grace of the Holy Spirit makes the soul constantly active in doing good, and always ready for spiritual ascents. Of such living and ever active water did the Apostle Paul drink, causing him to forget those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before. [Phil. 3:13] Then the woman sayeth unto Him, Sir. Do you see how at once she abandons her perception of Him as a man of low rank, and instead adopts great reverence, calling Him "Sir"? However, she

has not yet perceived the depth of Christ's words; while He means one thing by the word water, she understands something quite different.

12-15. Surely Thou art not greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. She claims Jacob as her father, inserting herself into the noble lineage of the Jews. Do you see the intelligence of the woman? From the difference between the two kinds of water, she at once infers the difference between the two who give these waters. "If," she says, "You can give such water of which you speak, certainly You would be greater than Jacob who gave us this water." Her words, and drank thereof himself, are in praise of the sweetness of the water in Jacob's well. The patriarch was so pleased by the water in this spring that both he and his sons drank of it. Her words, and his cattle, indicate the abundance of the water. Not only was the water so sweet that Jacob himself drank of it, the supply was so plentiful that it watered his multitude of cattle. When the woman said, Surely Thou art not greater than our father Jacob, the Lord does not reply openly, "Yes, I am greater!" lest He appear to boast, not yet haven given any sign of His own power. But by His answer this is exactly what He implies. "He who drinks of this water will thirst again, but he who drinks of My water will never thirst. If you marvel at Jacob who gave you this water, much more should you be amazed at Me. For I give you a far superior water, which becomes a spring of water continuously multiplied." The saints do not receive a portion from God and preserve that same quantity until the end, but instead accept their portion as the seeds and the beginnings of good, which they themselves use up entirely, making it multiply. The Lord teaches this very thing in His parables of the talents and of the innkeeper. The man who had been given two talents earned another two by laboring and putting them to work; and to the innkeeper who received the man wounded by thieves the Lord promised, "Whatever more you have spent of your own, I will give back to you." [See Mt. 25:20-30 and Lk. 10:35] Therefore, this is what the Lord implies here: "I too give water to the thirsty, but what I give does not remain

the same quantity that was given, but overflows and becomes a spring." The Lord gave Paul a small amount of water, that is, the catechesis imparted to him by Ananias, but Paul showed this small gift of instruction to be a fountain pouring out torrents of preaching that reached from Jerusalem to Illyria. How then did the woman react to these words? Still in a lowly manner, for she thought that His words were about actual water, yet she also shows signs of spiritual advance. Before, when she could not understand, she had asked dubiously, Whence then hast Thou that living water? Now she accepts His words without doubt and says, Give me this water. She appears wiser than Nicodemus, who received a much lengthier explanation from the Lord and still responded, How can these things be? [Jn. 3:9] But she already begins to look down on Jacob's well. For she says, "If You have such water, give it to me, and I will no longer come here to draw." Do you see that she now holds the Lord in higher esteem than she does Jacob?

16-22. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.Go, call thy husband. Seeing her eager to receive what He offered and insistent that He give it, He says, Call thy husband, as if to point out, "You should share My gift with him as well." She answered, I have no husband, striving at once to hide her sin and receive the gift without delay. The Lord now reveals through prophesy His own power—He enumerates her former husbands and rebukes the man with whom she is now living secretly. Did the woman become vexed at His rebuke? Did she flee from Him in shame? No, she marveled and cleaved to Him all the more, saying Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet, and questioned Him about divine doctrines and not such worldly things as bodily health and money, so inclined was her soul to the love of wisdom and virtue. What does she ask? Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. Here she refers to Abraham and those with him. For it was on this

mountain, they say, that Isaac was led up to be sacrificed. [Gen.22] And how is it, she says, ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship? Do you see how much more lofty her thoughts have become? Only moments earlier her concern was how to avoid the daily labor of satisfying one's thirst; now she asks questions concerning dogmas. Christ sees her capacity to understand spiritual thing, yet does not answer her question (for it was not an important matter), but instead reveals a greater teaching, greater than what He had disclosed to Nicomdemus or to Nathaniel. The time is coming, He says, when God will be worshiped neither here nor in Jerusalem. You are striving, He says, to show that the worship of the Samaritans is superior to that of the Jews. But I say to you, that neither here nor there has the first place of honor: there will be another way, superior to both. Yet I also declare to you that the worship of the Jews is more holy than that of the Samaritans. For ye worship ye know not what: we, the Jews, know what we worship. Christ counts Himself as one of the Jews, speaking in terms of the woman's understanding. She thinks of Him as a Jewish prophet, and so He says, We worship. In what way did the Samaritans not know what they worshiped? They thought that God was limited to one location [their holy mountain]. This is why, when the lions were devouring them as was related above, they sent word to the king of the Assyrians that the God of that place did not accept them. This is also why they continued for a long time to worship idols, and not God Himself. But the Jews were free of this misconception and knew God to be the God of all, although not all the Jews understood this. For salvation is of the Jews. This has two meanings for us. First, that the good things that are in the world came from the Jews. The knowledge of God and the rejection of idols took its beginning from the Jews; and all other teachings, and even your own Samaritan worship (though it is not correct), began with the Jews. Secondly, the Lord names His own Advent, which was from the Jews, "salvation." For the Lord, Who came from the Jews according to the flesh, is Himself Salvation.

23-24. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. We Jews have more than you Samaritans regarding the manner of worship; nevertheless, the worship of the Jews will also come to

an end. It is not only the places of worship that will change, but the manner of worship itself. This change is at the very doors, and now is, and the practices taught by the prophets will not last much longer. By true worshippers the Lord means those who live according to His own law, who do not confine God to one place, as do the Samaritans, and who do not serve Him with a material, bodily worship, as do the Jews, but who worship Him in spirit and in truth, that is, with their soul and with purity of mind [nous]. Because God is spirit, that is, bodiless, He must be worshipped in a bodiless manner which is in accordance with the soul. This is what it means to worship in spirit, for the soul is both spirit and bodiless. But because there are many who appear to worship Him in accordance with the soul, but do not hold to the Orthodox doctrine concerning Him, such as the heretics, He also added the words, and in truth. For one must both worship God with the mind [nous], and hold to the true doctrine concerning Him. Perhaps someone will say that by these two things, spirit and truth, are implied the two parts of our Christian philosophy, action [praxis] and contemplation [theria]. In spirit means "by action." For as the divine Apostle says, As many as are led by the Spirit of God … mortify the deeds [tas praxeis] of the body. [See Ro. 8:13-14] And again, The desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. [Gal. 5:17] Therefore, to worship the Father in spirit implies the active practice of the virtues [subduing the flesh,] while worshiping Him in truth implies the contemplation of the divine. This is what Paul means when he writes, Therefore let us keep the feast … with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. [I Cor. 5:8] Sincerity refers to purity of life, which is active virtue; truth refers to divine contemplation, which concerns itself with the truth of the word of doctrine. Spirit and truth may also be understood as follows. It was characteristic of the Samaritans to think of God as enclosed in a certain place, and to say that He must be worshipped "in this place." On the other hand, it was characteristic of the Jews that every aspect of their worship was performed as a type and foreshadowing of things to come. In spirit was said in reference to the Samaritans, so that what He means is this: you Samaritans offer to God a kind of local veneration. True worshippers will not be limited by locality; they will worship in spirit, which means, in mind and soul. Neither will they worship as do the Jews with types and foreshadowings, but in truth, because the Jewish customs and observances are about to come to an end. Since the Judaic law, understood according to

the letter, was a type and shadow, perhaps the words, in spirit, are in contrast to the letter of the law. (For the law of the letter no longer prevails among us, but the law of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.) [II Cor. 3:6] And the words, in truth, are in contrast to the types and prefigurings. Therefore, He says, the hour cometh, and indeed now is, meaning, the time of My Advent in the flesh, when true worshippers will not worship in one place only, like the Samaritans, but in every place offering bodiless worship according to the Spirit, as Paul also says, Whom I worship with my spirit. [Ro. 1:9] Nor will they, like the Jews, offer service to God that is a type, a shadow, and a prefiguring of things to come, but instead a worship that is true, containing nothing obscure. Such are the worshippers whom God seeks: spiritual, because He is Spirit, and true, because He is Truth.

25-27. The woman saith unto him, I know that the Messiah cometh, Who is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He. And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with a woman: yet no man said, What seekest Thou? Or, Why talkest Thou with her? How did the woman know that the Messiah was coming, Who is called Christ? From the writings of Moses, since, as we have already said, the Samaritans accepted the five books of Moses. From these they knew the prophecies about Christ, and that He is the Son of God. For the words, Let us make man, [Gen. 1:26] indicate that the Father was speaking to the Son; it was the Son Who spoke with Abraham in his tent; and Jacob spoke these prophetic words concerning the Son, A ruler shall not fail from Judah … until there come the things stored up for Him, and He is the Expectation of the Nations. [Gen. 49:10] Moses himself said, The Lord thy God shall raise up to thee a prophet of thy brethren, like me; Him shall ye hear. [Dt. 18:15] And many other things were proclaimed concerning the coming of the Christ. This is how the woman can say, I know that the Messiah cometh. The Lord then reveals Himself to her, as demanded by the sequence of their conversation. If He had said right from the start, "I am the Christ," He would not have persuaded the woman, and would have appeared overbearing and arrogant. But now that He has brought her step by step to remember the expectation of the Messiah, suddenly He reveals Himself. Why did He not reveal Himself to those Jews who continuously asked Him, "Tell us if Thou art the

Christ," but did so to this woman? He said nothing to those others because they did not inquire for the purpose of learning, but with the intent to slander Him all the more. Because this woman is honest He openly reveals Himself. She questioned Him with all sincerity of thought and purpose, simply desiring to know the truth. This is made clear by what followed. When she heard His words, not only did she herself believe, but she led others into the net of faith as well, always showing her mind to be both probing and believing. At just the right moment, when the Lord's teaching and conversation with the woman was completed, the disciples returned. They were astounded at His humility when they saw Him, a Man renowned and acclaimed by all, condescending with meekness and compassion to speak with a woman, and moreover, one who was a pauper and a Samaritan. They were astounded, but not so bold as to ask what He had been discussing with her, for they were always respectful to Him, as is proper for disciples towards their teacher. On other occasions they did act more boldly, for instance, when John leaned on His breast, or when they approached Him to ask which of them was the greatest, or when the sons of Zebedee asked Him if one of them could sit at His right hand and the other at His left. They did so because they inquired about seemingly urgent matters that pertained to themselves. But in this case, because there was no need to ask about something that did not concern them, such boldness was out of place.

28-30. The woman left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him. The words just spoken to her kindled such zeal in her heart that she left her water pot, in an instant preferring Christ's water over that of Jacob's well. Now she becomes no less than an apostle, ordained to this rank by the faith that has taken hold of her heart, teaching an entire city and drawing it to Christ. Come, she says, see a man, who told me all things that I ever did. Once her soul was inflamed with divine fire, she gave no thought to anything earthly, not even shame or dishonor. See how she is not ashamed to parade her sins, when she says, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. She could have spoken more guardedly, by saying for instance, "Behold a prophet Who knew my thoughts." Instead, she scorns her own reputation and thinks only to proclaim the truth. She does not state categorically, "This is the Christ," but rather, Is not this [perhaps] the

Christ? encouraging them to reach the same conclusion themselves and making her words easier for them to accept. If she had insisted, "This is the Christ," they may have scoffed at her and rejected out of hand the opinion of this woman of such ill repute. Some have understood the five husbands of the Samaritan woman to represent the five books of Moses, which the Samaritan woman alone accepted. Christ's words, He whom thou now hast, they say means, "My word which you have now received from Me is not thy husband, that is, "You have not yet been yoked to My teaching." One could also say that the Samaritan is a type and symbol of human nature. Our human nature formerly dwelt on a mountain, that is, in a mind full of divine grace. Before he sinned Adam was adorned with every divine gift and was even a prophet. When he was raised from sleep he spoke prophetically of the fashioning of the woman and the relationship of the husband to her. He said, This now is bone of my bones, and, Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother … [Gen. 2:23 and 3:1] Our nature, then, was in this mountain, that is, the lofty mind; but when it offended [and rebelled against] God, it was led away captive, and the devil, who had taken us prisoner, also took our nature's holy seed, by which I mean all divine thoughts, and led them away to Babylon, that is, into the confusion of this world. In their place the devil planted barbarous thoughts. But these were devoured by lions, namely, the good thoughts which govern us as kings, until they were persuaded to accept the words of God. But they did not accept them entirely, for the evil which had once settled in our mountain, that is, in our mind, while accepting the law of Moses, did not become altogether good and remained under the curse. Therefore Jesus journeyed to us, that is, He undertook many paths and stratagems to bring us salvation, sometimes using threats and warnings, sometimes the blows of calamities, sometimes benefactions, and at other times promises of good things. When He had grown weary from His journey and all the methods undertaken for our correction, He found at last another means for our salvation, at which He sat down and rested, and was pleased with it. What was it? The font of baptism, by which He brought benefit to our nature, as to the Samaritan woman. This spring may rightly be called the well of Jacob, that is, the well of him who tripped by the heel and supplanted his brother Esau. [See endnote (1)

.] For in the font of baptism a man can trip up and vanquish the devil, because there the Lord has crushed the head of the dragon and given him as food to the Ethiopian people. [See Ps. 73:15] For no others have been nourished and gladdened by this dragon except those who are darkened and black in soul and have no share in the divine light. Five husbands have been yoked to our nature, namely, the various laws which God has given to her: first in Paradise, then to Noah, then to Abraham, then to Moses, and lastly, through the prophets. For Noah received a commandment after the Flood, and Abraham received the law of circumcision. [See Gen. 9:1-17 and 17:1-14] After our nature had been wedded to these five laws, she took to herself a sixth, who was not her husband and whom she had not yet wedded, the law of the New Testament. One might also understand this sixth, which was not our nature's husband, to be the law of idolatry. For indeed God had not given her this law for a husband; instead, she had joined herself to it as an adulteress. Therefore the prophet says, She [Judah] hath committed adultery with wood, and, They [Israel] have fornicated under every tree, [Jer. 3:9,6] referring to the pagan carvings and trees which they worshipped. Our nature has fallen headlong to such depths of senselessness as to worship, simply because they are lovely, such beautiful trees as the cypress, the plane tree, and the like. Therefore, when man had loved this sixth, an adulterer, and had fallen into idolatry, then the Lord came and delivered us. This is why He says, he whom thou now hast, for at the time of Christ's appearing even the wisest of the Jews had fallen into Hellenism, of whom the clearest example is the sect of the Pharisees, who believed in fate and practiced astrology. The Samaritan woman also represents every soul which is yoked irrationally to the five senses and then errs grievously in doctrine, like one who takes a sixth man in adultery. To such a soul Jesus gives good things, either through baptism or through the font of tears. Tears may indeed be called Jacob's well, springing from a repentant mind which has supplanted wickedness. From this water the mind drinks, and his children, namely, his thoughts, and his cattle, those parts of the soul not endowed with reason, such as anger and desire. For tears bring refreshment to the soul, its thoughts, and its faculties.

31-34. In the mean while, His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have food to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him aught to eat? Jesus

saith unto them, My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. The disciples asked the Lord to eat, meaning, they begged Him, not in a presumptuous manner, but out of love for their Master, for they saw that He was weary from the journey and the oppressive heat. But knowing that the Samaritan woman was about to bring to Him nearly all the inhabitants of the city, and that the Samaritans would believe in Him, the Lord replies, "I have food to eat, which is, the salvation of men. And I have a greater desire for this food than any one of you has for material food. But you, My disciples, do not know this food which I have to eat. Because you are still dull in understanding and unable to fathom my enigmatic words, you do not know that I call the salvation of men my food." In another sense, "You do not know this food," means, "You do not know that the Samaritans will believe and will be saved." What do the disciples do? They are still bewildered and ask among themselves, Hath any man brought Him aught to eat? Being as always in awe of Him, they do not dare to question Him further. But although they did not ask Him, He reveals the meaning of His mysterious words, saying, "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me (the will of God is the salvation of men), and to finish His work." The prophets and the law were not able to complete the work of God because they themselves were imperfect and incomplete, able to reveal only types and foreshadowings of the good things to come. But the Lord completed God's work, which is, our salvation and our renewal. It seems to me that God's work also means man himself, whom the Son of God alone completed. He did so by revealing our nature to be sinless in Him, once He had shown it to be complete and perfect in every good work through His divine life in human flesh, overcoming the world [at every point] until the end. The law, too, is the work of God, in that it was written by God's finger, [See Ex. 31:18 and Deut. 9:10] and the Lord completed the law. For the end of the law is Christ, [Ro. 10:4] Who, when every requirement of the law had been fulfilled, made it to cease, transforming bodily worship into spiritual. The Lord often speaks in riddles to make His listeners more attentive and to stir them up to ask and learn the meaning of His veiled words. By calling man's salvation food, He teaches His disciples that, once they have been ordained as the teachers of the world, they too should pay less attention to food for the body, and redirect their hunger to the saving of men. Take note that the Lord did accept food offered Him by others, for the disciples said, Hath any man brought Him aught to eat? He did this, not

because He needed others to minister to Him (how could this be true of Him that giveth food to all flesh?) [Ps. 135:25], but so that those who brought food to Him might have their reward and become accustomed to feeding others. At the same time, He gave an example to all men not to be ashamed of poverty and not to be embarrassed when given food by others. It is especially necessary in the case of teachers that others provide them with food, that they might be undistracted in the constant ministry of the word. This is the very thing He taught His disciples, that they should be fed by those whom they teach. [See Mt. 10]

35-37. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. Now he begins to reveal clearly to His disciples the meaning of what He had said before in riddles. "You say," meaning, you think, "that the harvest," namely, the material harvest, "is coming in four months. But I say to you, the noetic harvest is here already." He said this in reference to the Samaritans who were just then approaching Him. "Therefore lift up your eyes, both noetic and physical, and behold the multitude of approaching Samaritans and the souls eager and ready to believe, which are like fields white for the harvest." Just as whitened ears of wheat are ready for harvest, so have these men been prepared for harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. What He means is this: the prophets sowed but did not reap. Yet they have by no means been deprived of the pleasure of the reward, but rejoice with you who do the reaping. It is not so with [farmers'] harvests, where, if it should happen that one man sows and another reaps, there is only sorrow for the man who does not reap. But in the spiritual harvest, the prophets who preached long ago, cultivating and preparing the minds of men, rejoice together with you who now draw men to salvation. The Lord says, I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour, so that when He should send the disciples out to preach, they would not be overwhelmed by the difficulty of the task. The prophets undertook the

harder work, He says, while you are sent out merely to complete what has already been prepared. He speaks truly, mentioning that well-known proverb, One soweth, and another reapeth. See how He speaks always with authority as Master, It is I Who sent you to reap [Eg ymas apesteila therizein]. Let the followers of the accursed Marcion, Manes, and the like, who would sever the Old Testament from the New, take note, for here they are rebuked. If the Old had indeed been separated from the New, how could the Apostles have reaped what the prophets had sown? But the Apostles have reaped the harvest of the Old Testament, which therefore is not estranged from the New—they are one and the same. And let the followers of Arius hear that it is as Lord and Master that He sends out His disciples. He sends them out to cut down and reap Jews and Greeks alike, who had stood planted in the earth and in corruptible things, and to carry them into the threshing floor, that is, into the Church, where they are threshed by the oxen, who signify the teachers, and made subject to them. There they are crushed and broken [signifying repentance and contrition], and when they have discarded all that is chaff, fleshly, and fuel for the fire, they are stored up as pure ears of wheat in heavenly granaries, becoming food for God Who takes delight in their salvation. In this same manner Paul reaped souls and cut them away from the earth, teaching us that our citizenship is in heaven. [Philip. 3:20] The words, look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest, some have elegantly applied to old men, referring to their white beards and the harvest of death.

39-42. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, who testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word, and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. The Samaritans believed because of the woman’s own words, wisely determining among themselves that she would not have exposed the secrets of her life in order to please another, unless the Man Whom she proclaimed were truly great and extraordinary. Therefore, showing their faith by their works, they asked Him to live with them always. For the word tarry [meinai] means "to make one’s home" among them. But they did not persuade Him, and He stayed

there only two days, during which time many more believed because of His teaching. The Evangelist does not need to tell us the particular words of His marvelous teaching: merely stating the end result allows us to sense their divine power. Often the Evangelists omit many of His great deeds and words, because they do not write in order to make a grandiose display of His life, but simply to declare the truth. By His mere presence among the Samaritans, the Lord is also teaching something more profound—without any sign or miracle, they believed and begged Him to live with them. But the Jews, when given ten thousand signs and miracles, drove Him away, for those in his house shall be all a man's enemies. [Micah 7:6] See how quickly the multitude outdid the woman who taught them. They do not call Him "prophet," or "Saviour of Israel," but, the Saviour of the world, using the definite article which indicates, "This is the Saviour," Who essentially and in actuality saves all mankind. There have been many who came to save —lawgivers, prophets, angels—but this One is the true Saviour.

1. See Gen. 25:26, 25:34, and 27:36. When the Rachel, the wife of Isaac, gave birth to twins, the younger twin, Jacob, seized the heel [pterna]of the older, Esau. In adulthood Jacob tricked and supplanted [e-pternike] Esau on two occasions, first cheating him out of his birthright by a mess of pottage, and later cheating him of his last blessing from his father Isaac. On this latter occasion Esau cried out in vexation, Rightly was his name called Jacob, for lo! this second time has he supplanted [e-pternike] me. In the writings of the holy fathers, Jacob becomes a type and symbol of the Christian who is enlightened by the grace of Baptism to struggle against his sins and passions, and by doing so to trip up and vanquish Satan.

Sunday of the Blind Man

1–2. And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? The Lord leaves the temple in order to dampen the anger of the Jews a little, and turns to the healing of the blind man. By this miracle He attempts to soften their stubborn disbelief, though they derived no benefit from it; at the same time, He shows them that He did not speak idly or boastfully when He said, *Before Abraham was, I am* (Jn. 8:58). Behold this miracle, the like of which has never been seen: others have restored the sight of blind men, but never of a man born blind. It is clear that Christ performed this miracle as God Who is before Abraham. To prove this to the Jews, He intentionally approached the blind man, and not vice-versa. When they see the Lord looking intently at the blind man, the disciples ask, *Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* This question appears to be illogical. How could the man have sinned before he was born? The apostles, of course, did not accept the foolish notion that the soul commits sin in another world, before the body is formed, and is punished by being joined to the body. Being fishermen, they would never have heard of this teaching of the Greek philosophers. Their question, then, might appear foolish, but not to one who is attentive. The apostles heard Christ tell the paralytic, *Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee* (Jn. 5:14). Now they see the blind man and wonder, "The paralytic was punished because of his sins; but what do You say about this man? How could he have been punished for his sins? He was blind from birth. Did his parents sin? That also cannot be, for a child is not punished for his father's sins."

Thus their question was an expression of perplexity, which the Lord dispels by explaining, "*Neither hath this man sinned,* (how could he before he was born?) *nor his parents*." Christ does not say simply, "His parents did not sin," implying that they were without fault; He adds, *that he was born blind*. His parents did sin, but that was not the cause of his blindness. It would be unjust to charge the sins of parents to the children, who have done nothing wrong. God makes this clear through the words of the prophet Ezekiel (18:2): "Let this parable no longer be spoken, *The fathers have eaten unripe grapes, and the children's teeth shall be set on edge*." The Lord also gave

this commandment, through Moses: *And the sons shall not be put to death for the fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin* (Dt. 24:18). But some might object, "Yet it is written, *I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God, recompensing the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation* (Ex. 20:5)." It must be understood that this is not a universal decree applying to all men at all times, but only to those who came out of Egypt. Also, the meaning of the decree must be considered carefully. It does not say that the children are punished for the sins of their fathers, but rather that the sins of the fathers—meaning, the punishments for their sins—will be "recompensed" upon their children. This is because the children have committed the same sins as the fathers. The Lord did not want those who came out of Egypt to think that if they committed the same or worse sins than their fathers they would not be punished. Another way to put it is: "The sins of your fathers (that is, the penalty for their sins,) will come upon you also, because you did not become better than they, but have committed the same, and even worse." Even when you see infants taken from this life, you must understand clearly that God cut their life short out of love for man. Had they lived, they would have become worse than their parents and filled their own souls, and the souls of many others, with wickedness. But all this is hidden in the abyss of God's judgments. Let us now continue.

3–**5. Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.** Now another perplexity arises. One might ask, "How could Christ say this? Was it not unjust to deprive this man of his sight *so that the works of God should be made manifest in him*? Could not these works have been revealed some other way?" We would answer, "How have you been treated unjustly, O man?" "I have been robbed of light," he replies. "But what harm did you suffer by being deprived of material light? Now you have received not only physical vision, but that incomparable blessing—the enlightenment of the eyes of your soul." Thus the affliction was to the blind man's benefit, and through his healing he came to know the true Sun of Righteousness. Therefore, the blind man was not wronged; he was blessed.

Now, understand this as well, every student of Divine Scripture: the conjunctions ἵνα and ὅπως (both translated in English as "that") are often used to express the outcome, but not the intended result, of the action stated in the main clause. Thus David says, *Against Thee only have I sinned, ... that Thou mightest be justified in Thy words* (Ps. 50:4). The word *that* introduces a result unintended by David. When David sinned, he did not do so with the purpose in mind of justifying God; but his sinning did result in God being justified. David proved himself unworthy of all that God had given him: he abused his royal power, committed murder and adultery, violated divine commandments, and showed contempt for God. Taking advantage of his kingship, David spurned the laws of the One Who made him king. Had he been a commoner, he would have been unable to commit the two great sins so easily. Once the Lord had examined and decided his case, the necessary consequence of David's crimes was that God was *justified* and had *prevailed* over the king who was condemned. There are many places in the Epistles where such expressions are used. In Romans Paul writes, "*Because that which may be known of God is manifest* to the Greeks, *for God hath showed it unto them*, making *His eternal power and Godhead . . . understood by the things that are made, . . . so that they are without excuse* (Rom. 1:19-20)." God did not give this knowledge to the Greeks in order to deprive them of any excuse when they sinned. He gave it to them so that they would not sin. When they did sin, their knowledge of the Creator manifest in His creation rendered them guilty without excuse. Likewise, in another place Paul says, *The law entered, that the offense might abound* (Rom. 5:20), although the law certainly was not given in order to make sin more prevalent, but just the opposite, to keep it in check. But because the recipients of the law did not want to restrain their sin, the law—defining what is a transgression—resulted in sin "abounding." They considered their sins to be greater and more numerous because they sinned with full knowledge of the law.

In light of all this, Jesus' words here, *that the works of God should be made manifest*, do not supply the reason why the man was born blind, but state the consequence—good came from evil, to the glory of God. Let us suppose that a man builds a house but leaves one portion of it unfinished, for this reason: at a later time, if anyone should question if he were the builder, he could dispel any doubt on this score by completing the unfinished part to

match perfectly with the original. In like manner, Jesus our God fashioned all the members of the blind man's body except for the eyes, which He omitted. By healing them now, He completes the divine act of creating and demonstrates that He is the Creator. When He said, "that the glory of God *should be made manifest*," He was referring to Himself, not the Father. The glory of the Father was obvious; it was His own glory, equal to the Father's, that needed to be revealed. For He Who now appears as a man, in the beginning fashioned man. That He is speaking about Himself becomes clear from what follows: "*I must work the works of Him that sent Me*. I must reveal Myself by doing the very same works as the Father." Note that He does not say, "I must do works similar to the Father's," but " works identical to those done by the Father Who sent Me. I must do them *while it is day*, that is, during this present life, when men can choose to believe in Me. For *the night cometh, when no man can work*, that is, believe. In the age to come, it will be too late to believe." *Day* means this present life, when we are able to work, as we do during the day. But, elsewhere in Scripture, Paul calls life *night*, because we cannot know in this life whether a man pursues virtue or wickedness—his thoughts and motives are hidden from us. Moreover, Paul calls this life *night* by comparison to the daylight of the age to come, in which the righteous will shine. Christ refers to the age to come as *night*, *when no man can work*; Paul calls this *day*, since the righteous will be illumined and the deeds of each revealed. In the age to come there will be no faith, but only obedience—voluntary or involuntary. "*As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*," says Christ, "because I enlighten souls by My teaching and miracles. By healing the blind man's eyes and giving them light, I shall enlighten the souls of many. I am Light, and I illumine both the senses and the spirit."

6–7. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. *When He had thus spoken*—Jesus did not stop with words, but at once added the deed—*He spat on the ground*, and having made clay, *He anointed the eyes of the blind man.* By using the clay, the Lord showed that it was He Who formed Adam out of clay. Earlier He announced, in so many words, "I am He Who formed Adam," offending His listeners; now He

demonstrates with an irrefutable deed the truth of that proclamation. Jesus created eyes for the blind man out of clay, just as He had done for Adam. He did not merely fashion the eyes, or open them, but gave them vision. This proves that it was He Who breathed the soul into Adam. Without the soul being present to impart its divine energy, even a perfectly formed eye would see nothing. Christ used spittle to make him see, because He was about to send the blind man to the pool of Siloam and wanted to make clear that He, not the water of that spring, was the source of the miracle. Let us learn that He fashioned and opened the man's eyes by the power which proceeds from His mouth; this is why He *spat on the ground* to make clay. Then, lest anyone imagine that the source of the miracle was the earth, He ordered the man to wash off the clay. Some say that the clay was not removed, but was fashioned into eyes.

Why does He command him to go to the pool of Siloam? First, that we may learn of the blind man's faith and obedience. He did not reason, "If the clay and the spittle will give me eyes, why must I wash in the pool of Siloam?" Instead, he obeyed the One Who commanded. Second, with this order, the Lord confounds the Jews who wilfully rejected Him. It is likely that many saw Him anoint the man's eyes with clay and paid close attention to what He was doing. As a result, no one could later dispute that the Lord had done these things. Third, by sending the blind man to the pool of Siloam, Christ shows that He is not an opponent of the Old Testament. And why does the Evangelist add the interpretation of the word "Siloam"? So that you might learn that the pool of Siloam is a figure of Christ, and that it was Christ Who healed the man there. Just as Christ is the spiritual Rock, so is He the spiritual Siloam. As the gush of the spring of Siloam was fearful in its strength, so too the advent of the Lord, hidden and unknown to the angels, overwhelmed all sin by its power.

8–11. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Staggered by this extraordinary miracle, the

neighbors still did not believe. Yet the blind man's arriving at the Pool of Siloam, his eyes smeared with mud, was ordained by the Lord for the express purpose of drawing the attention of many onlookers, who later would be unable to deny that they knew the man. But they disbelieved nevertheless. The Evangelist does not simply remark in passing that the man was a beggar: he does so to show that the Lord's love for mankind was so inexpressibly great that He condescended to help the most abject of men. With tender solicitude He healed beggars, teaching us to care for the least of our brethren. Unashamed of his former affliction, unafraid of the crowd, the blind man boldly confesses, *I am he*, and proclaims his benefactor: *A man that is called Jesus*…. He calls the Lord *a man* because he knows nothing about Him. But what he does know (of the circumstances of the healing), he confesses to all. How did he know that his healer was Jesus? He had heard the Lord conversing with His disciples. When the disciples asked about the blind man, Christ repeated what He often told them, such as, *I must work the works of Him that sent Me* (v. 4), and, *I am the light of the world* (v. 5), and so forth. These were things that no one except the Lord taught, and from them the blind man understood that this was Jesus. That Christ had made clay and anointed his eyes, the blind man knew by feeling; of the spittle, he said nothing because he did not yet know about it. What he did not know, he did not mention, so truthful a man was he.

12–16. Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. After the Lord had healed or worked some other miracle, He would withdraw from that place to avoid ostentation. This is why the Jews ask the blind man, *Where is He?* He answers, *I know not*, for he is always truthful. *They brought* him *to the Pharisees* for closer and harsher questioning. The Evangelist emphasizes that *it was the Sabbath day* in order to reveal their evil intent as they grasp for allegations to make against Christ. By accusing the Lord of breaking the Sabbath, they hoped to divert attention from the

miracle. They demand, “How did He open your eyes?” rather than simply asking, “How did you receive your sight?” compelling the blind man to admit that Jesus had made clay on the Sabbath. For they continuously accused the Lord of violating the Sabbath. But because he had already given this information to the people who were listening to him, he does not mention Jesus’ name, nor what the Lord said to him. He explains merely, *He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.* It is likely that the people who brought the blind man had slandered the Lord by telling the Pharisees, “Look what Jesus is doing on the Sabbath.” Note the blind man’s boldness when speaking with the Pharisees. The Jews brought him to the Pharisees so that he would become frightened and deny the healing. But he cries out, “I *do see*!” *Therefore said some of the Pharisees*, not all of them, but the most insolent, *This man is not of God.* But *others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?*

Behold how the attitude of many of them softens as a result of the miracles. They are Pharisees and rulers, yet they begin to be won over by this sign, and to take Christ’s side, so that *there was a division among them*. The division appeared earlier in the crowd, when some of the people said, *He deceiveth the people*, while others said, *He is a good man* (see Jn. 7:12, 43).” But now the division arises between the rulers, and many Pharisees take issue with their fellows and speak in Christ’s defense. Although they took His side, they did so weakly, and without conviction. Hear what they say: “*How can a man that is a sinner do such* things?” See how feeble is their resistance, how cunning His accusers! Rather than say, “This man is not of God, because He heals on the Sabbath,” the crafty Pharisees object, *He keepeth not the Sabbath day*. Not once do they mention the good deed, but only the violation of the Sabbath. Note this as well: the rulers are more reluctant than the people to admit the good Christ did. From the start a difference of opinion is evident among the common folk, with many supporting Christ. Only later did this praiseworthy division appear among the rulers. I call it “praiseworthy,” because there are good separations and justifiable schisms. The Lord says, “I came to send a *sword* on the earth (see Mt. 10:34).” The *sword* means the salutary divergence of opinion that may arise when true reverence for God is at stake.

17–19. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see? Which of the two groups of Pharisees asked the blind man, *What sayest thou of Him?* The one inclined to judge Christ fairly. Having posed the question, *How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?* they now bring forward the beneficiary of the Lord's power, in defense of Christ and as a living refutation of the Lord's slanderers. This faction of the Pharisees did not demand, "What do you have to say about that lawbreaker who dared to make clay on the Sabbath?" Instead, they speak kindly to the blind man, even mentioning the miracle. They admit that *He hath opened thine eyes*, as if to encourage him to speak openly on Christ's behalf. They actually prompt him to declare that Jesus opened his eyes. "After what Jesus did for you," they say, "you ought to proclaim Him to all." Therefore, the blind man confesses Christ as far as his knowledge of Him permits, stating that his benefactor is not a sinner but is from God. He affirms that Jesus *is a prophet*, while the evil contingent of Pharisees continues to insist that *this man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day*. To them, Christ was a violator of the Sabbath because He applied clay with one finger. Never mind that they, with their whole hand, loosed their animals on the Sabbath and led them to water! These hard and obstinate men call for the blind man's parents, meaning to bully them into denying their son's blindness. Unable to silence the grateful blind man, they try instead to intimidate his parents and impugn the miracle. They interrogate them angrily, but with the utmost cunning. They do not say, "*Is this your son,* who was once blind?" but instead, *who ye say was born blind*. The implication is that the parents spread the story that he was blind, when in fact he was not. O wretched Pharisees, what father would spread such a lie about his own child? From two sides the Pharisees hedge in the parents and press them to repudiate their son: they make an insinuation, *who ye say was born blind*; then they demand, *How then doth he now see?* The Pharisees pretend that the very fact the blind man could see is evidence that the parents were lying earlier when they said he was born blind. "Either he cannot see now, or he was never blind. But obviously he sees now—so you are liars!"

20–23. His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. The Pharisees had put three questions to the parents of the blind man: "Is he your son? Was he born blind? And how did he gain his sight?" To the first two they assert: "He is our son, and he was born blind." Concerning how he was healed they are silent, because they do not know. Without doubt this took place for the greater confirmation of the truth; for the man who received the benefit of the miracle, and was the most credible of all the witnesses, said exactly the same. Then the parents add, "*He is of age*; he is not an infant, or so immature as not to understand how he was healed." *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews.* They were still weak in faith and more faint-hearted than their son, who proved to be a steadfast witness to the truth. As a reward, God also illumined the eyes of his mind.

24–29. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the glory: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He to thee? How opened He thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be His disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is. At the parents' suggestion, the insolent Pharisees had the blind man brought to them again, not for further questioning, but to intimidate him into denying his Healer. Their words, *Give God the glory*, mean, "Confess that Jesus did nothing to you—by not attributing anything good to Jesus, you give glory to God." *We know*, they say, *that this man is a sinner*. Why, then, O Pharisees, did you not accuse Him when He challenged you, *Which of you convinceth Me of sin* (Jn. 8:46)? But the blind man answers them, *Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not*; that is, "It is

not mine to decide this now, nor even to consider it. Of one thing I am certain: He did work a miracle for me. Ponder this single fact, and it will dispel your perplexity." By asking him again, *What did He to thee?* they attack the Saviour for anointing with clay on the Sabbath. The blind man understood that they were not interested in his answer, but only wanted to revile Jesus, and so he rebuked them, saying: "I no longer wish to speak with you. I answered you many times *and ye did not hear*." Then he added these words, which cut them to the quick: *Will ye also be His disciples?* By this he lets it be known that he wants to become Christ's disciple. Teasing and jesting with them, he speaks calmly, not in the least cowed by their rage. They answer with insult, *Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.* Again they lie. Had they been Moses' disciples, they would also have been Christ's, as the Lord told them: *Had ye believed in Moses, ye would have believed Me* (Jn. 5:46). They did not say, "We have heard," but, *we know that God spake unto Moses.* It was their forebears who told them this, yet they claim to have certain knowledge of what they had learned only by hearing. When, however, they see with their own eyes Christ working miracles, and hear Him speaking divine words from heaven, they called Him an imposter (see Jn. 7:12). Do you see how malice leads to madness?

30–33. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing. "You Jews reject the One Who healed me," he says, " because you *know not from whence He is.* But the very fact that He is not among those you deem illustrious makes it even more remarkable that He can do such things. Clearly, He has some greater power and needs no help from man." Then the blind man answers those who had said earlier, *How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles* (v. 16)? turning their own words against them: "*We* all *know*," he says, "*that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth*." Note that he not only declares the Lord to be free of sin, but indicates that He is highly pleasing to God and that all that He does is of God, by saying, *If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.* Knowing well

that the Pharisees were intent on covering up the miracle, the blind man, with full understanding, proclaims the beneficent deed: "*If* He *were not of God*, He could not have worked such a miracle, unlike any other since the world began." Others had opened the eyes of those who had lost their sight because of disease, but never of someone blind from birth. What occurred here is without precedent. Clearly, the worker of this miracle has greater power than any man.

Some, applying cold and formal logic, have expressed this doubt: "How can the blind man say that *God heareth not sinners*? As the Lover of man, God most certainly hears those who pray that their sins be forgiven." It is unnecessary to respond to this, except to point out that the words, *God heareth not sinners*, mean that God does not grant sinners the power to work miracles; for the Spirit of God does not *dwell in a body that is subject unto sin* (Wis. 1:4). But God does hear the prayers of those who with heartfelt repentance ask forgiveness of their sins; but He hears them as penitents, not as sinners. As soon as they ask forgiveness, they move from the rank of sinners to that of penitents. It is, therefore, certainly true that *God heareth not sinners*; neither does He give to sinners the grace to work miracles. When unrepentant sinners ask Him for this power, they are grasping for something that does not belong to them. How could God heed those whom He rejects? Consider how the blind man said, *If any man be a worshipper of God*, then added, *and doeth His will*. Many are God-fearing, but fail to do the will of God. One must fear God and do His will. Both faith and works are necessary; or, as Paul says, faith and a good conscience (see I Tim. 1:5); or, to express it in the most exalted terms, divine vision and active virtue (θεωρία καὶ πράξις). Faith truly comes alive only when accompanied by God-pleasing deeds. These foster a good conscience, just as wicked deeds an evil conscience. Likewise, works are enlivened by faith. Apart from one another, both are dead. As it is written in another place, *Faith without works is dead* (Jam. 2:20)—and so are works without faith. Behold how truth bestows on a beggar, unused to public debate, the power to confess Christ boldly and to rebuke the high and mighty among the Jews! Great is the power of truth; so restricted and feeble is falsehood.

34–38. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that

they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him. As long as they still had hope the blind man would say something of use to them, the Pharisees called on him and questioned him more than once. But when they realized by his answers that he did not think as they did, but took the side of truth, they despised and rejected him as one *born in sins*. Quite foolishly do they refer to his blindness, thinking that he had been condemned before he was born and was punished with blindness at birth. This is nonsense. These sons of falsehood expelled from the temple the confessor of truth, but it was to his benefit. Cast out of the temple, he was at once found by the master of the temple. Apparently dishonored for Christ's sake, he was honored by the knowledge of the Son of God. Jesus *found him*, the Evangelist says, implying that He had come for just this purpose—to console the blind man, as the judge of a contest consoles an athlete after the agony of his exertion by placing on his head the crown of victory. The Lord inquires, *Dost thou believe in the Son of God?* Why does He ask this? After such a vigorous dispute with the Pharisees, after the bold words he had spoken, can there be any doubt that he believes? The Lord asks the question, not because He is uncertain whether the man believes, but in order to reveal Himself to him. For the blind man had never seen Christ, even after his healing. How could he have, when he was straightway harried by the Jews, as if by vicious dogs? The Lord asks this question now, so that the blind man's response —"And *who is He*, this Son of God?"—would provide the opportune moment to reveal Himself. At the same time the Lord shows that He highly honors the faith of the blind man. "The people reviled Me greatly, but their words mean nothing to Me," He says. "One thing matters, that you believe." The blind man's question, "*Who is He, Lord*, this Son of God?" reveals his ardent desire. The Lord answered, *Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.* He does not say, "It is I Who healed you and said to you, 'Go, wash.'" He begins enigmatically, *Thou hast ... seen Him*; then He continues more openly, and it is He that talketh with thee. The Lord first said to him, Thou … hast seen Him, to remind the blind man of the healing and to help him recognize that he had received his sight from the One Who now stood before him. And the blind man at once believes, showing his

fervent and true faith by falling prostrate before Him, thus confirming his own word by his deed and giving glory to Jesus as God. For according to the law, worship must be rendered to God alone (see Dt. 6:13).

Understand also the spiritual meaning of this miracle. Every man is blind from birth, as a result of being brought into existence by coition, and being yoked thereby to corruption. From the moment we were punished with mortality and our race was condemned to increase by a passionate means of conception, a thick cloud covered our noetic eyes, like a cloak of flesh, as the Scriptures say (see Gen. 1:21). The Gentiles are "blind from birth" in another sense: they made gods of what is subject to birth and corruption, and consequently were blinded, as Paul says, *and their foolish heart was darkened* (Rom. 1:21). Just as blind were the Persian magi, who wasted their lives with horoscopes and astrological predictions. The blind man whom Jesus *saw* (Jn. 9:1) therefore represents all men, and the Gentiles in particular. He was unable to see his Creator, so God Himself, *the Dayspring from on high, through His tender mercy visited* him (Lk. 1:28). How did Jesus "see the blind man"? As He *passed by* (Jn. 9:1), which means, not while the Lord was in heaven, but when He came among us by His Incarnation. Humbling Himself and accepting limitation, He bent down from heaven, as the Prophet David says, to see all the sons of men (see Ps. 13:3; 32:13). Although He came, first and foremost, *to the lost sheep of the sons of Israel* (Mt. 10:5-6; 15:24), He also "passed by" and saw the Gentiles; for the secondary purpose of His coming was to visit *the people which sat in the darkness* (Mt. 4:16) of complete ignorance. And how does He heal their blindness? By spitting on the ground and making clay. If it helps you to believe, consider how God the Word descended upon the holy Virgin like a rain-drop falling upon the ground (see Ps. 71:6), and anointed the eyes of the mind with clay made from spittle and the earth. This clay is the one Christ in two natures—the divine nature, symbolized by the rain-drop and the spittle, and the human nature, symbolized by the earth from which came the body of the Lord. Do men receive healing merely by believing? Certainly not: they must first go to Siloam, which is the spring of Baptism, to be baptized into Him Who sends them there, namely, Christ. *For as many of us as have been baptized* spiritually *have been baptized into Christ* (Gal. 3:27).

After a man has been baptized, temptations will beset him. He *shall be brought before governors and kings* (Mt. 10:18), as it were, because of his allegiance to Christ Who healed him. He must then hold steadfastly to his confession, never denying it out of fear, but willing to be denounced and excommunicated, as it is written, *Ye shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake* (Mt. 24:9), and, *They shall put you out of the synagogues* (Jn. 16:12). Even if this confessor is cast out by men who hate the truth, and driven from their temples and the places of honor, (meaning, he is deprived of wealth and glory,) Jesus will find him. Then he who was abused by his enemies will be highly honored by Christ. The Lord will bestow upon him knowledge and a more exact faith, and the confessor will fall prostrate and worship Christ, Who appears as a man but is also the Son of God. For there are not two sons—one, the Son of God, and another, the son of Mary (this is the blasphemous doctrine of Nestorius)—but one and the same Son, of both God and man. See how the Lord answered the blind man when he asked, "*Who is* the Son of God, *that I might believe in Him?*" Thou hast both seen Him, Christ says, and it is He that talketh with thee. Who gave this answer? Was it not the Son born of Mary? But this Son of Mary is also the Son of God, not two different persons. Therefore the holy Mary is truly the Theotokos, the Birthgiver of God, who bore the Son of God made flesh. He is undivided, and the two are One—Christ the Lord.

39–41. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might become blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. The Lord saw that the Pharisees harmed themselves by rejecting the benefit of this miracle, and therefore deserved greater condemnation. Appraising events by their outcome, He declares, *For judgment I am come*, meaning, "for the greater condemnation and punishment of My enemies, *that they which see not might see; and that they which see*, such as the Pharisees, *might become blind* in the eyes of their soul." Behold, the man blind from birth sees both spiritually and physically, while those who think they see are blind noetically. In this verse, the Lord speaks of two kinds of vision and two kinds of blindness, but the Pharisees, who are always fixated on the material world, think He means only a

material affliction. *Are we blind also?* they ask, fearing only physical blindness. The Lord desires to show them that it is better to be blind physically than to lack faith, saying, "*If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.* If blindness were your natural condition, you would have some excuse for being ill with unbelief. But you insist that you can see; furthermore, you are eyewitnesses of the miraculous healing of the blind man. Because you suffer from self-inflicted unbelief, you deserve no forgiveness. Your sin remains unabsolved, and you will undergo greater punishment, because you refuse to acknowledge the truth even after seeing such wonders." The words, *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin*, may also be understood as follows. "You seem afraid only of physical blindness, but I warn you of spiritual blindness. *If ye were blind*, that is, ignorant of the Scriptures, *ye should have no sin;* that is, you would be sinning in ignorance. But since you say that you see, and consider yourselves wise and learned in the law, you condemn yourselves and have the greater sin, because you sin deliberately, with knowledge."

The Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council: John 17:1-13

1–3. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee; as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent. Having encouraged the disciples to face bravely the coming tribulations, Christ raised their spirits again, this time by prayer. By praying, He teaches us that when temptations assail us we should put everything else aside and flee to God. However, one could say that Jesus was not actually praying, but rather conversing with the Father. Do not be surprised that it is said elsewhere that Jesus did pray, kneeling on the ground (see Mt. 26:39). For the Lord came, not only to reveal Himself to us, but to teach us every virtue by His own example, as a good instructor. Showing us that He goes willingly to His crucifixion, He says, *Father, the hour is come.* See how He longs for the Passion, and embraces it. He calls it His glory, and His Father's glory, for indeed, by the Passion both were glorified. Before the crucifixion, He was practically unknown, even to the Jews: *Israel does not know Me* (Is. 1:3), He said. Afterwards, the whole world flocked to Him.

What exactly is the "glory" that belongs to Him and the Father? It is the benefitting of all flesh by God's gifts. This is the glory of God. The Lord had previously commanded His disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles (Mt. 10:5). Now, grace is no longer limited to the Jews. It is offered to the whole world. To this end, the Lord was planning to send the apostles to the Gentiles. But lest the disciples imagine this plan was His own notion, contrary to the will of the Father, Jesus reminds them that it is the Father Who has *given Him power over all flesh*. In what sense does Christ have power over all flesh, when, as we know, not everyone believes? Christ strives to bring everyone to faith. If some refuse to heed Him, it is not His fault, but the fault of those who reject His teaching. When it is said that the Father "gives" something to the Son, or that the Son "receives" something from the Father, understand that such expressions are a condescension to the limitations of His listeners' understanding, as we have pointed out before. Christ was always careful to avoid speaking openly

about His divinity. The Jews would have been outraged to hear Him claim to be divine, so He said only as much as they could bear at the time. We employ similar condescension when speaking to infants: without naming the object, we point to bread or water, and ask, "Do you want this?" Remember how, at the beginning of the Gospel, the Evangelist stated boldly about Christ: *All things were made by Him* (Jn. 1:3), and, *As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God*, (Jn. 1:12). How then can He, Who gives others the power to become sons of God, lack divinity in Himself and require it as a gift from the Father? And so, understand that an exalted reality underlies the humble statement. *To as many as Thou hast given Him*—here is the modest expression; *that He should give* them *eternal life*—here, the revelation of the power and authority of the Only-begotten Godhead.

If God alone gives physical life, how much more so eternal life? Christ calls the Father *the only true God*, in contrast to the false gods of the Gentiles, but by no means does He exclude Himself from the divinity of the Father. Because He is the true Son, He must also be true God, as the Evangelist insists in his general epistle: *Jesus Christ ... is the true God, and eternal life* (I Jn. 5:20). On the basis of the present text from the Gospel, the heretics would make a false god of the Son, and have the Father as their sole divinity. They should be careful not to forget everything else written by Saint John, who also tells us that the Son is the true light (Jn. 1:9). According to their reasoning, this must mean that the Father is a false light! And so, if the Evangelist calls the Father *the only true God*, it is to distinguish Him from the false gods of the Greeks, not from the Son. Incidentally, the heretics tie the passage, *Ye ... seek not the honour that cometh from God only* (παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ, Jn. 5:44), to the one we have been discussing. They imagine that this reinforces their argument that if the Father is the only God (ὁ μόνος Θεός), the Son cannot be God. What an absurd conclusion!

4–6. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I have manifested Thy name … We learn from this that the Father glorifies the Son in the same manner as the Son glorifies the Father. *I have glorified*

Thee on the earth, Christ declares. Quite rightly did He add, *on the earth*, for the Father was already glorified in the heavens and worshipped by the angels, while the earth lay in ignorance. Having proclaimed the Father to all, the Son now declares, "I have glorified Thee everywhere on earth by imparting the knowledge of God, and I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me." The work of the Only-begotten Son Incarnate is: to sanctify our nature; to overthrow the ruler of this world, who made himself out to be God; and to plant the knowledge of God in the creation. But how had He finished this work, when it was hardly begun? "I have finished what is My part to do," He explains. Indeed, Christ has already accomplished the greater part by implanting in us the root of every good, by conquering the devil, and by flinging Himself into the maw of the all-devouring beast of death. From this "root" would follow by necessity all the fruits of the knowledge of God. It is in this sense that He has finished the work. "I have sown, I have planted the root: the fruits are sure to follow. *O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was formed.*" At that point the nature of flesh had not yet been glorified: it had not been made worthy of incorruption and of sharing the royal throne. This is why the Lord declares, *Glorify Thou Me*, meaning, "Receive My dishonored and crucified human nature, and raise it up to the glory which I—the Son and Word of God—had with Thee before the world was." After His ascension, Christ in our human nature was seated on the royal throne, and now He is worshipped by all creation.

Then Jesus explains His words, *I have glorified Thee on the earth*, as meaning, I have manifested Thy name. How is it that the Son was first to manifest God's name, when Isaiah said, *They ... shall swear by the true God* (Is. 65:16)? As we have often pointed out, God's name was already revealed, but only to the Jews, not the whole world. Now Christ announces that God's name will also be revealed to the Gentiles, since He has destroyed the devil, the teacher of idolatry, and planted the seeds of divine knowledge. If at that point the pagans already had some knowledge of God, it was only as creator-demiurge, not as Father. The Son revealed that the creator was the Father. Moreover, by His own words and deeds, Christ revealed not only His Father, but Himself.

6–8. I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. By saying, *The men which Thou gavest Me*, the Lord makes two points: first, that He is not in opposition to the Father—"I did not snatch these men from You"; and second, that it is the Father's will that the disciples believe in the Son—"You are well pleased that they have come to Me. Between us there is no rivalry, only love and oneness of mind. *And they have kept Thy word* by believing in Me and giving no heed to the Jews." He who believes in Christ "keeps the word of God"—the Scripture and the law—for the Scripture proclaims Christ, and everything the Lord told the disciples was from the Father. As Jesus told the disciples earlier in this discourse, *I speak not of Myself* (Jn. 14:10). He also instructed them, *Abide in Me* (Jn. 15:4), and they did abide in Him and kept the word of the Father.

Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. This means: "Now have My disciples known that (in My divine nature) I have nothing of My own and I am not different from You. Nothing whatsoever of the things Thou hast given Me were given by grace, as are the divine gifts bestowed upon created beings. Rather, they are of Thee," which means, "They are not something I have acquired, but belong to Me by nature; they belong to Me as the Son Who has full authority over His Father's property." One might ask, "How have the disciples known this?" The Lord provides the answer: *I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me,* which means, "They know this by My words and teachings." Christ taught them continuously: "All that I have is of the Father; I came out from Thee; and, Thou didst send Me." Throughout the Gospel the Lord affirms that He is not an adversary of God, for He does the Father's will.

9–10. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. To make it clear that everything He has been saying to the Father is purely for the benefit of His

disciples, the Lord now adds, "*I pray for them*, and not for the world. I love and take care of My disciples; I bestow upon them what is Mine; and I beseech You, Father, to protect them. I do not pray to You on behalf of coarse, vulgar men who think about nothing except this world; *I pray ... for them whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine*." When the Lord says, whom Thou hast given Me, this does not mean that the Father only recently gave Him authority over these men. It does not mean that there was a time when the Father had this authority, but the Son did not, nor that the Father lost this authority when that the Son gained it. To make this clear, the Lord declares, "*All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine*. For as long as they have been Yours, they have been Mine, for all Thine are Mine. They did not come into My possession a moment ago. And the fact that they are Mine in no way implies that they are no longer Yours. They have not been taken from You, for all Mine are Thine. Furthermore, I am glorified in them, which means, "I share the glory of My Father, just as the son of an emperor shares his father's authority and glory: both are held in equal honor by their subjects." If the Son were less than the Father, He would not dare to say, *All Thine are Mine*. The master owns everything that his servant has, while the servant owns nothing of his master's. Here, on the contrary, what the Father has belongs to the Son, and what the Son has belongs to the Father. Thus the Son is glorified in all who belong to the Father, for the Son's authority over all creation is equal to the Father's.

11–12. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. Why does Jesus repeat, *I am no more in the world,* and, *While I was with them in the world?* At first glance these statements seem to contradict the promises He had made: *Lo, I am with you always* (Mt. 28:20), and, *Ye shall see Me* (Jn. 16:16). The truth is that He tells the disciples only as much as they are able to understand at the moment. Since they were likely to be distraught at being left without His help, Christ declares that He has committed them to His Father's care and protection. (For the disciples' benefit) He says to the Father , "Because You are calling Me to Yourself, You must guard them by Your own name," which means, "by the help and power that You have given Me." What kind of protection does the Father give? He bestows unity,

that they may be one. “If they preserve love for one another and do not separate into factions, they will be invincible.” Of course, Christ does not mean that they should become literally one person. He means that they should imitate the Father and the Son by acquiring unanimity of thought and will among themselves. Because the disciples would have found it impossible to believe Him if He had said, “Even though I am no longer with you, I will still protect you,” Jesus reassures them by calling upon the Father to be their protector. By appearing to entreat the Father on their behalf, He gives them hope. In the same vein, when Christ says, *I kept them in Thy name*, He does not mean that He kept them safe only by the power of the Father’s name. He speaks in this manner—as we have explained many times—on account of the weakness of His listeners, who as yet could not grasp that He was God. By doing so, the Lord strengthens and reassures them: “While I was with you, you were protected and guarded by the power of the Father’s name. Now you must believe that He will continue to guard you, for it is His nature to do so.”

12–13. Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. *Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept:* these words convey profound humility if one properly understands them. Throughout this chapter it might appear that Jesus is directing the Father to guard the disciples after His departure, like a man who gives his friend a sum of money for safe keeping and tells him, “Look, I have not lost any of this: neither must you.” But in reality, the Lord is consoling the disciples: “These things I speak in the world to reassure the disciples and give them joy. Knowing that You have received them safely and will guard them—just as I did, without losing any—they can again breathe freely.” How can the Lord claim to have lost none of them, when Judas fell away, and many other followers left Him as well (see Jn. 6:66)? “As far as it depended on Me,” He explains, “I have lost none of them. I did everything on My part to keep them, and I guarded them zealously. If some chose to reject Me, it is not My fault.” *That (ἵνα) the Scripture might be fulfilled*, meaning, every Scripture referring to the son of perdition. For he is mentioned in various places in the Psalms and in other prophetic books. As

we have explained before, the conjunction ἵνα, (in order) that, is commonly used in Scripture to express the outcome of an event.

First Sunday after Pentecost

Whosoever Shall Confess Me Before Men
Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

Ch. 10:32-33. Whosoever therefore shall confess in Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in heaven. He exhorts them to bear witness even unto martyrdom. For belief only within one's soul does not suffice; He desires also the belief confessed with the tongue. He did not say, "Whosoever shall confess Me," but in me, that is, in My strength. For he who confesses does so aided by the grace which is from above. But as for him who denies, Christ did not say "in Me," but whosoever shall deny Me, showing that he denies because he does not have the aid from above. Therefore everyone who confesses that Christ is God will find Christ giving confession of him to the Father, that he is a true servant. But those who deny will hear the words, "I do not know you."

37. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Do you see when it is that we must hate our parents and children? When they want us to love them more than Christ. And why should I speak of father, mother, and children? Hear what is even greater than this:

38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. Whoever, He says, does not renounce this present life and give himself over to shameful death, for this is what the cross signified to the ancients, is not worthy of Me. But since there are many who are crucified, such as robbers and thieves, He added, and followeth after Me, that is, live according to My laws.

Ch. 19:27. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Even though it seems that Peter had not forsaken very much, as he was poor, understand that in actuality he, too, forsook much. For the fewer possessions we have, the greater the attachment. But Peter also rejected every worldly pleasure,

even natural affection for his parents. For these passions war against the poor as well as the rich (1) What then does the Lord answer?

28. And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Surely they will not be seated? (2)

Of course not, but He indicated by means of a throne the great honor they will enjoy. Will Judas also be seated? No; for Christ said, which have followed Me, that is, "followed Me to the end," but Judas did not follow to the end. By a different interpretation, God often promises good things to those who are worthy. But if they should change and become unworthy, as Judas did, those good things are denied. Similarly with more menacing things, He often threatens but does not carry out the threat, because we have repented. By regeneration understand the resurrection of the dead at the Last Judgement.

29. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. So that no one would think that what was said applied only to the disciples, Christ broadened the promise to include everyone who does likewise. They will have, instead of family of the flesh, intimacy and brotherhood with God; instead of lands, Paradise; instead of houses of stone, the heavenly Jerusalem; instead of a mother, the venerable mothers in the Church; instead of a father, the priests; instead of a wife, all the faithful women, not in marriage—far from it!—but in affection and spiritual relation and compassionate care for them. The Lord does not bid us simply to separate from our families, but only when they impede our piety. In the same manner, He bids us to despise even our own life and body, but not with the result that we slay ourselves. See how good God is: He not only gives us these good things, but adds to them eternal life. You, then, O reader, hasten to sell your possessions and give to the poor. Possessions are, to the wrathful man, his anger; to the fornicator, his disposition for debauchery; to the resentful, his remembrance of wrongs. Sell these things and give them

to the poor demons who are in want of every good thing. Return the passions to the creators of the passions, and then you will have treasure, which is Christ, in your heaven, that is, in your mind which has been exalted above this world. For he who becomes like the heavenly One has heaven within himself.

30. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. Christ is suggesting here the Jews and the Gentiles. For the Jews, who were first, became last, while the Gentiles, who were last, were put first.

1. Natural affection for one's family becomes a passion when it is placed before love of God.

2. In the ancient world, the privilege to sit in the presence of others indicates a high office or rank such as that of a king or one representing him, or of the father in the presence of his children.

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Come Follow Me
Matthew 4:18-23
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

18-19. As He was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishermen; and He saith unto them. These two had been disciples of John, and while John was still living they had approached Christ. But when they saw John arrested, they returned again to their fishing, and so Christ comes, fishing for them, and says:

19-20. Come follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him. Behold obedient men, who followed Him immediately. From this it is clear that this is the second time that He called them. For they had been taught by Christ on a previous occasion [see Jn. 1:35-42], then left Him, and when they saw Him again followed Him readily.

21. And going on from thence, He saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a boat with Zebedee their father. It is the greatest of virtues to care for one's father in his old age, and for the father to be supported by the just labors of his sons. Mending their nets. They were poor and as they were unable to buy new nets, they were stitching together their old ones.

22. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him. It appears that Zebedee did not believe and it is for this reason that they left him. Do you see when it becomes necessary to leave one's father? When the father becomes an impediment to virtue and reverence for God. When James and John saw the first two follow Christ, they rightly followed Christ as well, imitating their good example.

23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. Jesus enters the synagogues of the

Hebrews to show that He is not opposed to the law. And healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. He begins with miracles, to give credibility to what He teaches. By disease is meant chronic illness, and by infirmity, a temporary bodily disorder.

Third Sunday after Pentecost

The Eye is the Lamp of the Body
Matthew 6:22-33
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

22-23. The eye is the lamp of the body: if therefore thine eye be sound, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness. This means, if you fill your mind with worries over money, you have extinguished the lamp and darkened your soul. Just as the eye that is sound, or "healthy" brings light to the body, and the eye that is evil, or "diseased" brings darkness, so also does the state of the mind affect the soul. If the mind is blinded by these worries, it is cast into darkness; then the soul becomes dark, and how much more so the body as well?

24. No man can serve two lords. What He means is this: no man can serve two lords who command things that are opposed to each other. Such lords are God and mammon. We make the devil our lord when we make the belly our god. But by nature and in truth God is the Lord, and mammon is unrighteousness. For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Do you see that it is not possible for a rich man and unrighteous man to serve God? His love of money drives him away from God.

25. For this reason I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.For this reason—for what reason? Because concern over money drives a man away from God. The soul does not eat, for it is bodiless, but Jesus said this according to the common use of the word (1) For it is obvious that the soul does not consent to remain in a body if the flesh is not fed. Jesus does not forbid us to work, but rather He forbids us to give ourselves over entirely to our cares and to neglect God. Hence we must work for our livelihood while not neglecting the soul. Is not life more than food, and the body more than raiment? This means: He gave us much greater things, life itself, and formed our bodies—will He not give us food and clothing?

26. Behold the birds of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much more than they? Although He could have given the example of Elijah and John the Baptist, instead He mentions the birds in order to shame us, for we are even more witless than these creatures. God feeds them by having given them the instinctive knowledge for finding food.

27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? This means: Even if you take the utmost care, you can do nothing if God does not will it. Why then do you drive yourself to exhaustion with futile worries?

28-29. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. He shames us not only by the birds, which lack reason, but also by the lilies, that wither. If God adorned the lilies in such a manner, without any necessity to do so, how much more will He fulfill our own need for clothing? He shows that though you go to great lengths, you are not able to be adorned as beautifully as the lilies. Even Solomon the most wise and splendid, with all his kingdom at his disposal, could not array himself in such a manner.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? We learn from this that we ought not to be concerned with beautifying ourselves, for our adornments wither like the fading flowers. Therefore one who beautifies himself is like grass. But you, He says, are creatures endowed with reason, whom God fashioned with both soul and body. Those "of little faith" are all those who concern themselves with such thoughts. If they had perfect faith in God, they would not give such anxious thoughts to these things.

31-32. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do

the Gentiles seek. He does not forbid us to eat, but to say, What shall we eat? The rich say in the evening, "What shall we eat tomorrow?" Luxury and excess are what He forbids.

32-33. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. The kingdom of God is the enjoyment of all that is good. This comes through righteousness. To him who seeks after spiritual things God in His generosity adds what is needed for physical life.

1. Take no thought for your life [psyche] Psyche can also mean "soul": here Blessed Theophylact has both meanings in mind.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Healing of the Centurion's Servant
Matthew 8:5-13
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

5-6. And when Jesus entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying. This man, too, did not approach Jesus while He was on the mountain, so as not to interrupt the teaching. This is the same man mentioned by Luke [Lk. 7:1-10]. Although Luke says that the centurion sent to Jesus others who were elders, this does not contradict Matthew who says that the centurion himself came to Jesus. It is altogether likely that first he sent others, and then, when death was imminent, he himself came and said:

6-7. Lord, my servant lieth at home a paralytic, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion did not bring his servant lying on his bed to Jesus, as he believed that Jesus could heal him even from a distance. Therefore:

8-10. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. The centurion says, "If I who am the servant of the emperor command the soldiers who are under me, how much more so art Thou able to command death and the illnesses, so that they depart from one and beset another?" For illnesses of the body are God's soldiers and officers of punishment. Christ marvels, therefore, saying, "I have not found such great faith among the Israelites as I have in this Gentile." (1)

11-12. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit at table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness:

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus did not say outright, "Many Gentiles shall sit at table with Abraham...." But He said it in a roundabout manner, so as not to scandalize the Jews, Many shall come from the east and west. He mentioned Abraham to show that He does not stand in opposition to the Old Testament. By saying outer darkness, He shows that there is also an inner darkness which is less severe. For in hell there are varying degrees of punishment. He calls the Jews the sons of the kingdom, for the promises of the Old Testament were made to them. He is saying, Israel is my firstborn son [Ex. 4:22].

13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour. And when the centurion returned to his house, at the same hour, he found his servant well. Healing the servant by His word alone, Jesus showed that He also spoke the truth when He said that the Jews would be cast out from the kingdom.

1. A scholion in the Greek text adds: Others have interpreted these words thus: When Jacob, the renowned patriarch, beheld the ladder reaching up to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending, he understood that God was present in that place, but not that He is everywhere present. Thus he said, How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God. [Gen. 28:16-17] The Lord now marvels at the great and supernatural faith of this Gentile, saying, "Not even in Israel"—that is, in Jacob—"did I find such faith. For Jacob understood that I could appear in one place, but this man understands that I am everywhere in all places and that by word alone I can do all things. For he said, ’Only speak the word, and my servant shall be healed.’"

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

What Have We to Do with Thee?
Matthew 8:28-9:1
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

28. And when He was come to the other side into the land of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with demons, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. While the men in the boat were yet wondering what manner of man this was that even the winds and the sea obeyed Him, the demons come to proclaim the answer. Although Mark and Luke speak of one man who was possessed by a legion of demons [Mk. 5:9, Lk. 8:27], understand that this one man was one of the two mentioned by Matthew, evidently, the more notorious of the two. Jesus came alone towards them, since no one dared to bring them to Him, so fierce were they. They dwelt among the tombs because the demons wish to inspire the belief that the souls of those who have died become demons. Let no one believe this: for when the soul departs from a man, it does not wander about the earth. For the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God [Wis. of Sol. 3:1], and the souls of sinners are also led away, as was the soul of the rich man, Lazarus.

29. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? Behold, they proclaim Him to be the Son of God, but first they declare their enmity. The demons consider it torment to be prevented from harming men. Understand the demons' words, "before the time," to mean that they thought that Christ, not enduring their great wickedness, would not wait for the time of their punishment. But this is not so; the demons are permitted to contend with us until the end of the world.

30-32. And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine grazing. So the demons besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine. The demons asked this so that they could drown the swine, and thus the owners would be grieved and would not welcome Christ. Christ granted the demons their

request in order to show how great is their bitterness towards men, and that if they had the power, and were not prevented as they are by God, they would do worse things to us than they did to the swine. For God protects those possessed by demons so that they do not kill themselves.

32-34. And, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to those possessed of the demons. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their region. The inhabitants of the city begged Jesus to leave because they were grieved and thought that they would suffer something worse thereafter. You, O reader, learn that where there is swinish life, it is not Christ Who dwells there, but demons.

1-2. And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed. "His own city" means Capernaum, for it was there that He was living. He was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and lived for an extended length of time in Capernaum.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Thy Sins Be Forgiven Thee
Matthew 9:1-8
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-2. And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed.His own city means Capernaum, for it was there that He was living. He was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and lived for an extended length of time in Capernaum. This paralytic is not the same as the one mentioned in John [5:2-9], for that one was beside the Sheep's Pool in Jerusalem, while this one was in Capernaum. And that one had no one to help him, while this one was carried by four men, as Mark says [Mk. 2:3-12], who lowered him through the roof, a fact which fact Matthew omits.

And Jesus seeing their faith. Either the faith of the men who brought the paralytic, for Jesus often worked a miracle on account of the faith of those who brought the one sick; or, of the paralytic himself. Said to the paralytic, Take courage, child; thy sins be forgiven thee. Jesus calls him child, either as one of God's creatures, or because he believed. To show that the man's paralysis is a result of his sins, Jesus first forgives him his sins.

3-5. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? By knowing their thoughts, Jesus shows that He is God. He rebukes them by saying, "You think that I am blaspheming by promising to forgive sins, which is a great thing, and that I resort to this because it is something which can not be verified. But by healing the body, I shall guarantee that the soul has been healed as well. By doing the lesser deed, though it appears to be more difficult, I shall also confirm the remission of sins, which is indeed something great even though it appears easier to you since it is not visible to the eye."

6-8. But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins—then saith He to the paralytic—Arise, take up thy bed, and go

unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God Who had given such power unto men. Jesus commanded him to carry his bed so that the event would not appear to have been imaginary, and also, so that the multitudes would see the miracle. For they thought that Jesus—Who is greater than all—was only a man.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Healing of the Two Blind Men
Matthew 9:27-35
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. The blind men addressed to God the words have mercy, but as to a man, O Son of David. For it was well known among the Jews that the Messiah would come from the seed of David.

28. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. He led the blind men along even as far as the house, to show their steadfast faith and thus to condemn the Jews. He asks them if they believe, showing that faith can accomplish all things.

29-30. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened. He healed within the house and in private, to show us how to avoid vainglory. In everything He did He taught humility.

30-31. And Jesus sternly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. Do you see Christ's humility? They spread abroad His fame in thanksgiving, not out of disobedience. But if in another place Christ says, Go and tell of the glory of God [Lk.8:39], there is nothing contradictory in this. For He wants them to say nothing about Himself, but to speak of the glory of God.

32-33. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a mute man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spake. The disease was not a natural one, but from the demon. This is why others brought him forward. He himself was not able to call upon Jesus, as the demon had bound his tongue. Therefore Jesus does not require faith of

him, but immediately heals him by casting out the demon which had prevented his speech. And the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. The multitude marvelled, placing Christ even above the prophets and the patriarchs. For He healed with authority, unlike those who first had to pray. But let us see what the Pharisees said.

34. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out demons through the prince of demons. These words are the height of stupidity, for no demon casts out other demons. But let us suppose that He cast out demons as one who served the prince of demons, that is, as a magician. How then did He heal diseases, forgive sins, and preach the Kingdom? For the demon does just the opposite: he brings on diseases and separates man from God.

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. As Lover of mankind He did not wait for them to come to Him, but He Himself went all around. Therefore they could not say as an excuse that "no one taught us." He draws them to Himself by word and deed, teaching and working wonders.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

The Miracle of the Five Loaves and Two Fishes
Matthew 14:14-22
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

13-14. And when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick. The multitude show their faith by running to Jesus even as He is departing, for which they receive healing as the reward of faith. Their following on foot and without any provisions are also signs of faith.

15-16. And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the hour is now late; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy food for themselves. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. The disciples are compassionate and concerned about the multitude, not wanting them to go without food. What, then, does the Saviour do? Give ye them to eat, He says, not in ignorance of the extreme poverty of the apostles—far from it. But so that when they had said, "We do not have," He might appear to proceed to work a miracle out of necessity and not from vainglory.

17-19. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to Me. And He commanded the multitude to recline on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed. "Bring the loaves here to Me. Though it be evening, I Who created the hours am here. Though it be a deserted place, it is I Who giveth food to all flesh." We learn from this that we must spend in hospitality even the little that we have, just as the apostles gave to the crowds the little that they had. As that little was multiplied, so too will your little be multiplied. He bids the multitude to recline on the grass, teaching frugality, so that you also, O reader, may not take your ease on expensive beds and couches. He looks up to heaven and blesses the loaves, as if both to confirm that He is not opposed to God but that He came from the Father and from heaven, and also to teach us to give thanks when we begin a meal and only then to eat.

19-21. And He brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples gave them to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. He gives the loaves to the disciples so that they might always retain the miracle in their memory and not have it fade from their minds, although they did in fact immediately forget. There was food left over lest you think that He performed the miracle only in appearance. There were twelve baskets so that Judas too might carry one and thus remembering the miracle not rush headlong into betrayal. And He multiplies both the loaves and the fish to show that He is the Creator of earth and sea, and the Giver of what we eat everyday, and it is multiplied by Him. He performed the miracle in a deserted place lest anyone think that He bought the loaves from a neighboring town and distributed them to the multitude, for it was deserted. This is the explanation of the literal account. But in its spiritual sense, learn that when Herod, who represents the fleshly and superficial mind of the Jews (for "Herod" means "fleshly" and "skinlike"), cut off the head of John who was the head and chief of the prophets, it showed that Herod rejected those who prophesied of Christ. Whereupon Jesus withdrew to a desert place, to the nations who were desolate without God, and He healed the sick in soul and then He fed them. For if He had not forgiven our sins and healed our sicknesses by baptism He could not have nourished us by giving us the immaculate Mysteries, for no one partakes of Holy Communion who has not first been baptized. The five thousand are those who are sick in their five senses and who are healed by the five loaves. Since the five senses were diseased, there are as many poultices as there are wounds. The two fish are the words of the fishermen. The one fish is the Gospel and the other the Epistles. Some have understood the five loaves to signify the Pentateuch of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Twelve baskets were lifted up and carried by the apostles; for whatever we, the multitude, are unable to eat, that is, to understand, the apostles carried and held, that is, they accepted and understood. "Besides women and children." This means, allegorically, that a Christian man, woman, or child, must not in any way be childish, womanly, or unmanly.

22. And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. By saying "constrained", Matthew suggests how inseparable the disciples were from Jesus, for they wanted to be with Him at all times. He sends the multitudes away, not wishing to draw them after Him lest He appear to vaunt in His powers.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Jesus Walking on the Water
Matthew 14:22-34
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

22. And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. By saying constrained, Matthew suggests how inseparable the disciples were from Jesus, for they wanted to be with Him at all times. He sends the multitudes away, not wishing to draw them after Him lest He appear to vaunt in His powers.

23-24. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up onto a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. He went up on the mountain to show that we should pray in an undistracted manner; everything He did was for our sake as He Himself had no need of prayer. He prayed on into the evening, teaching us not to cease praying after a short time, and also to pray especially at night, for it is very quiet then. He permits the disciples to be caught in a storm, so that they might learn to endure trials bravely and know His power. The boat was out in the very middle of the sea so that their fear would be greater.

25-27. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Take courage; it is I; be not afraid. He did not appear immediately to them to calm the storm, but at the fourth watch, [that is, as the night was coming to its end], teaching us not to ask for a swift solution to our misfortunes but to endure them bravely. The night was divided into four parts by soldiers who stood guard in shifts, each "watch" lasting three hours. So then, sometime after the ninth hour of the night, the Lord appeared to them as God, walking on the water. But they thought it was a phantom, so extraordinary and strange was the sight. For they did not recognize Him by figure, because it was night and because of fear. He first

strengthens their resolve by saying: "It is I Who can do all things; take courage."

28. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. As Peter had the most fervent love for Christ, he desires immediately, before the others, to be near Him. For he believes not only that Jesus Himself walks on the water, but that He will grant this to him as well. Peter did not say, "Bid me to walk," but rather to come unto Thee. The former would have been ostentation; the latter is love for Christ.

29-30. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the mighty wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. The Lord laid the sea down beneath Peter's feet, revealing His power. See how Peter prevailed over that which was greater, the sea, but was afraid of the lesser peril, the wind; such is the weakness of human nature. And it was as soon as he became afraid that he began to sink. When his faith weakened, then he went down. The Lord did this so that Peter would not become puffed up, and to console the other disciples who perhaps envied him. Whereupon Christ also showed how much greater He was than Peter.

31-33. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, of what didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God. Showing that the cause of his sinking was not the wind but faintheartedness, Christ does not rebuke the wind, but the fainthearted Peter. This is why He raised him up and set him on the water, but allowed the wind to blow. Peter did not doubt in everything, but in part. Inasmuch as he was afraid, he showed lack of faith; but by crying out, Lord, save me, he was healed of his unbelief. This is why he hears the words, O thou of little faith, and not "O thou of no faith." Those in the boat were also delivered from fear, for the wind ceased. And then indeed, recognizing Jesus by these things, they confessed His divinity. For it is not an attribute of man to walk on the sea, but of God, as David says, In the sea are Thy byways, and Thy paths in many waters [Ps. 76:19]. The spiritual meaning of the miracle is

this: the boat is the earth; the waves, man's life troubled by evil spirits; the night, ignorance. In the fourth watch, that is, at the end of the ages, Christ appeared. The first watch was the covenant with Abraham; the second, the law of Moses; the third, the prophets; and the fourth, the coming of Christ. For He saved those who were drowning when He came and was with us so that we might know and worship Him as God. See also how Peter's later denial, return, and repentance were prefigured by what happened to him here on the sea. Just as there he says boldly, "I will not deny Thee", so here he says, Bid me come unto Thee on the water. And just as then he was permitted to deny, so now he was permitted to sink. Here the Lord gives His hand to him and does not let Him drown, and there, by Peter's repentance, Christ drew him out of the abyss of denial.

34-36. And when they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole. Jesus stayed for some time in Gennesaret, and the people recognized Him not only by sight but by the signs which He worked, and they showed fervent faith. So much so that they even desired to touch the hem of His garment, and indeed, when they did so, they were healed. You also, O reader, touch the edge of Christ's garment, which is the end of His sojourning in the flesh. For if you believe that He ascended, you will be saved. The garment means His flesh, and its hem, the end of His life on earth.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Healing of the Lunatic
Matthew 17: 14-23
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

14-15. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. That this man is exceedingly faithless is clear from the words which Christ spoke in reply to him, O faithless generation, and from the fact that the man himself blamed the disciples. The moon was not the cause, but rather, the demon would take note when the moon was full, and then would set upon his victim, so that men would blaspheme the created works of God as maleficent. You, then, O reader, understand that it is a foolish man that changes as the moon, as it is written [Sirach 27:11], at times waxing great in virtue, at other times waning and vanishing altogether. Then the foolish man becomes deranged and falls down into the fire of anger and lust, and into water, that is, the waves of the many cares of life, in which Leviathan the devil dwells, he who reigns over the waters. For are not the cares of the rich like waves that follow each other in quick succession?

16-18. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I endure you? Bring him hither to Me. And Jesus rebuked him; and the demon departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Do you see how the man has shifted the blame for his own lack of faith upon the disciples, saying that they were too weak to heal? The Lord, therefore, shames him for accusing the disciples, saying, O faithless generation, that is, "It is not so much the fault of the weakness of the disciples as it is of your lack of faith, which, being great, has prevailed over the equal measure of their strength." He rebukes not only this man, but everyone who lacks faith, even the bystanders. By saying, How long shall I be with you? Christ shows that He longs for the Passion upon the Cross and His departure from them. For He is saying, "How long shall I live among scoffers and unbelievers? And Jesus rebuked

him—whom? The man who was lunatic. From this it appears that he, too, lacked faith and his lack of faith had given occasion for the demon to enter him.

19-21. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. But this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. The apostles were afraid that they had lost the grace against demons that had been given to them; this is why they asked Jesus in private and with great anxiety. But the Lord reproves them for being imperfect in faith, saying, "Because of your unbelief. For if you had fervent, ardent faith, you would accomplish great things even though they appeared to be small." The location of the mountains which the Apostles moved is nowhere recorded, yet it is likely that they did move them, but the event was not written down; for not everything was written down. Or, by another interpretation, they did not move a mountain because there had been no occasion to do so, but they did even greater things than that. Note how the Lord said, Ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence, in other words, the mountain shall move when you say the word. But the Apostles did not say the word as there was neither occasion nor necessity, and so they did not move mountains. But if indeed they had spoken, they would have moved. This kind of demon is cast out by prayer and fasting. For they themselves who are demonized must fast, as well as those who would heal them; then comes the prayer, preceded by fasting, not drunkenness. Understand, then, that even perfect faith is as the grain of mustard seed, considered worthless on account of the foolishness of the preaching. Yet if it should find good soil, it grows into a tree in which the winged creatures of heaven, that is, soaring thoughts, may alight. Whoever, then, has perfect faith can say to this mountain, that is, to the demon, Remove hence. For Christ was also referring to the demon that had gone out.

22-23. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. He continually foretells the Passion, so that no one would think that He

suffered unwillingly, and also, to train them not to be shaken by the unexpected when it occurred. To the sorrow He weds the joy—that He will rise.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Man Who Owed Ten Thousand Talents
Matthew 18: 23-35
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

23. Therefore is the kingdom of the heavens likened unto a man who was a king, who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. The gist of the parable teaches us to forgive our fellow servants who have sinned against us, especially if they fall down before us begging forgiveness. To interpret the parable in its particulars should be done only by one who has the mind of Christ. Nevertheless, we shall attempt it. The kingdom is the Word of God, but it is not a kingdom of small extent, but of the heavens. The Word is likened to a man who was a king, that is, He Who became incarnate for our sake and appeared in the likeness of men, and He settles accounts with His servants as a Good Judge. He does not punish without first judging: that would be cruel.

24-25. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, who owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to made. It is we ourselves who owe ten thousand talents, receiving benefaction every day yet giving back nothing good to God in return. He who owes ten thousand talents is also that ruler who has received from God the protection and allegiance of many men, each man being like a talent, and then does not employ his sovereignty well. Selling the debtor along with his wife and children indicates alienation from God, for the one who is sold goes to another master. And is the wife not the flesh, being the mate of the soul, and the children, the evil deeds done by the soul and the body? He commands the flesh to be given to Satan for ravaging, that is, to be given over to illnesses or to the torment of the demons, but the children, that is to say, the doing of evil deeds, are given over to torture on the rack, as, for example, when God withers the hand that has stolen, or constricts it by means of a demon. See how the woman, which is the flesh, and the children, which is the doing of evil, have been given over to affliction so that the spirit might be saved, as in the case of that man who can no longer steal because his hand is crippled.

26-27. The servant therefore fell down prostrate before him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. Behold the power of repentance and the Lord's love for mankind. For repentance caused the servant to fall down prostrate before the king and cease from wickedness, since he who stands firmly in wickedness cannot be forgiven. In His love for man God forgave the debt entirely although the servant was not asking for complete forgiveness of the debt, but for an extension of time in which to repay it. Learn, therefore, that God gives more than we ask . His love for man is such that even what seems to be severe, the command that the servant be sold, God did not speak out of severity, but to terrify the servant in order to induce him to fix all his hope on entreaty and supplication.

28-30. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, who owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. He who had been forgiven went out, departed, and as a consequence, took his fellow servant by the throat: the one who lacks compassion is not he who remains in God, but rather he who departs from God and is a stranger to Him. So great was the servant's inhumanity that, although he had been forgiven the greater amount (ten thousand talents), he could not at all forgive the smallest amount (a hundred pence), nor even grant a postponement. And this despite the fact that the fellow servant spoke the very same words to him, reminding him of the words by which he himself had been saved: Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.

31. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorrowful, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. The fellowservants are the angels, who are shown here to be haters of evil and lovers of good. They do not tell these things to the Lord as if He were unaware of them, but in order for you, O reader, to learn that the angels watch over us and are angered by man's inhumanity.

32-34. Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all his debt. The master in his love for mankind takes issue with the servant, to show that it is not the master, but the savagery and the ingratitude of the servant that has revoked the gift. To what tormentors does he deliver him? To the punitive powers for eternal punishment. For the meaning of till he should pay all his debt is this: "let him be punished till he should pay all that was due." But he will never be able to pay his debt, and therefore his punishment will never end.

35. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. He did not say "your Father," but My Father. For such as these are unworthy to have God as their Father. He wants us to forgive from our hearts and not only from our lips. Understand, then, what a great evil is remembrance of wrongs, since it revokes the gift of God—though God does not repent of His gifts, nevertheless they are revoked.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

If Thou Wilt Be Perfect
Matthew 19: 16-26
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

16. And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. The man did not come testing Christ, but desiring to learn and thirsting for eternal life. He approached Christ as if Christ were a mere man. That is why the Lord says, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. This means, "If you call Me good thinking I am one of the teachers, you speak wrongly, for no man is essentially good; both because we are changeable and easily turned away from good, and because, by comparison with God's goodness, human goodness is counted as wickedness."

17-19. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The Lord directs the enquirer to the commandments of the law, so that the Jews could not say that He despised the law. What happened then?

20. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Some accuse him of boasting and arrogance. How could he have achieved love for neighbor if he were rich? For no one who loves his neighbor as himself is wealthier than his neighbor. Others understand it thus: suppose, he says, that I have kept all these things—what do I still lack?

21-22. Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me. But when the man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Everything, He says, which you say you have accomplished, you have done by fulfilling only the letter of the law, as do the Jews. But if thou wilt be perfect, that is, if you wish to be My

disciple and a Christian, then go and sell all that you have, and give everything all at once, keeping nothing back with which to give alms continuously. He did not say, "give repeatedly to the poor," but give once and for all and be stripped of your wealth. Since there are some who give alms but lead a life full of every kind of filth, He adds, and come and follow Me, that is, possess every other virtue as well. The young man, however, was sorrowful, for though he desired eternal life and the soil of his heart was deep and fertile, the thorns of wealth were choking him. For it says, he had great possessions. He who has few possessions is not similarly restrained by them, for the bond of many possessions is more tyrannical. Because the Lord was conversing with a rich man, He said, "Do you love wealth? Know that you will have treasure in heaven."

23-24. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. As long as a man is rich and he has in excess while others do not have even the necessities, he can in no way enter the kingdom of heaven. But when all riches have been shed, then he is not rich and so he can enter. For it is just as impossible for a man with wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. See how Christ first said it was difficult to enter, but here that it is completely impossible. Some say that camel is not the animal, but the thick cable used by sailors to cast their anchors.

25-26. When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible. The disciples, being compassionate, did not ask this question for their own sake, for they were poor, but for all men. The Lord therefore teaches us not to gauge salvation by human weakness, but by God’s power. If one only begins to cease from greed, he will advance to reducing his excess, and from there he will proceed to eliminating even his necessities, and thus he will be prospered along the way by God acting in collaboration with him.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Stone Which the Builders Rejected
Matthew 21: 33-42
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

33. Hear another parable: There was a certain man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it to husbandmen, and went into a far country. Yet another parable He brings to them, showing that though they were deemed worthy to receive an immeasurable degree of care for their condition, they did not get better. The man, a householder is the Lord Who in His love for man calls Himself a man. The vineyard is the Jewish people, planted by God in the land of promise. For He says, Bring them in and plant them in Thy holy mountain. [Ex. 15:17] The hedge is the law which prevented them from mixing with the Gentiles; or, it is the holy angels who guarded Israel. The wine-press is the altar; the tower, the temple. The husbandmen are the teachers of the people, the Pharisees and the scribes. The householder, God, went into a far country when He no longer spoke to them in a pillar of cloud. Or, the departure of God into a far country is His long-suffering; for when He is long-suffering and not in hot pursuit of wrongdoers, demanding an account, He appears to be asleep or absent on a far journey.

34-39. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.The time of the fruit drew near during the years of the prophets. For the servants who were sent are the prophets who were abused in various ways by the husbandmen, that is, the false prophets and false teachers of those times. One they beat, as they did to Micah when Sedek struck him on the jaw [III Kings (I Kings) 22:24]; another they killed, as they did to Zechariah [the father of John the Forerunner] between the temple and the

altar; another they stoned, as they did Zechariah, the son of Jodae the high priest [II Chron. 24:21]. Later the Son of God was sent and He appeared in the flesh. He said, They will reverence My Son, not unaware that they would kill Him, but signifying what ought to be. For, He says, they ought to honor the dignity of the Son even if they had killed the servants. But the husbandmen saw Him and said, This is the heir; come, let us kill Him. The Jews, too, said, "This is the Christ," and they crucified Him. They cast Him out of the vineyard, for the Lord was slain outside of the city. But since we would also say that the vineyard is the people, Christ was slain by the Pharisees, the evil husbandmen, outside the vineyard, that is, outside and apart from the will of the guileless people.

40-41. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.When He cometh. When? At the second coming? It seems to have this meaning, but a better meaning is this: the lord of the vineyard is God the Father Who sent His Son Who was slain by them. When He comes, that is, when He looks down on the lawlessness which the Jews committed, then He will miserably destroy them by sending the Roman army. And His vineyard, that is, His people, He will give to other husbandmen, that is, to apostles and teachers. Understand the vineyard to mean also the Divine Scriptures, in which the hedge is the letter, the wine-press that is dug is the depth of the Spirit, and the tower is theology, lofty and exalted. These Scriptures, then, were first possessed by bad husbandmen, the Pharisees; but God has let them out to us who cultivate them well. But they slew the Lord outside the vineyard, that is, outside those things of which Scripture spoke.

42-44. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? [Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will crush him to powder to be scattered.] The stone means Christ Himself; the builders are the teachers of the Jews who rejected Him as if He were useless, saying, "Thou art a

Samaritan and hast a demon." But when He rose from the dead, He was set in place as the head of the corner, that is, He became the head of the Church, joining Jews and Gentiles in one faith. For as the stone which forms the corner of a building makes continuous the walls leading to and from it, so Christ has bound all together in one faith. This corner is marvelous, and is the Lord's doing. [See Ps.117:22-23] For the Church which connects us and makes us one in faith is the Lord's doing, and is worthy of all wonder, so well is it built. And in another sense is it marvelous, because the Word of Christ has been confirmed and substantiated by marvels, that is, miracles, so that the composition of the Church is marvelous. The kingdom of God, that is, closeness with God, has been taken from the Jews and given to those who believed. Those who stumble against the Rock of Christ and take offence at Him will not only be crushed at the second coming, but already here in this life they have been scattered like powder by Christ. They have been scattered over all the earth, as we now see the pitiable Jews to be. Understand that he who is crushed to powder to be scattered is dispersed abroad and scattered in diaspora.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Wedding Feast
Matthew 22: 2-14
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-7. **And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man who was a king, who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were called to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them who were called, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fattened calves are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his field, another to his merchandise: and the others took his servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.**

This parable, too, like that of the vineyard, alludes to the disobedience of the Jews. But as that one indicates Christ's death, so this one indicates the nuptial joy, that is, the resurrection. But this parable also shows them to be worse transgressors than the men in the preceding parable. For the husbandmen of the vineyard slew those who demanded fruits of them. But these men vented their murderous rage upon those who had invited them to a wedding. God is likened to a human king, for He does not appear as He is, but as it is fitting for Him to appear to us. When we die as humans, subject to human failings, God appears to us in human form; but when we walk about as gods, then God stands in the congregation of gods.[Ps. 81:1] And when we live as wild beasts, then He, too, becomes for us a panther, and a bear, and a lion. He makes a wedding feast for His Son, joining Him to every soul that is beautiful. For the bridegroom is Christ and the bride is the Church and the soul. The servants that were sent out first are Moses and those with him, whom the Jews did not obey but provoked God in the wilderness for forty years and did not want to accept the word of God and spiritual joy. Then other servants, the prophets, were sent out; but of these, some they killed, as they did Isaiah; others they treated spitefully, as they did Jeremiah, throwing him into a pit of mire. Those who were less extreme merely declined the invitation: one went his way to his own field, that is,

turned towards a life of pleasure and carnal pursuits, for one's own field is the body; another, to his merchandise, that is, to a life of acquisition and profit, for merchants are a type of men most greedy for profit. This parable shows that those who fail to attend the wedding feast and the fellowship and feasting with Christ, do so primarily on account of these two things—the pleasures of the flesh, or the passion of greed. In this parable the meal is called a dinner, although elsewhere the same thing is called a supper [Lk. 14:16], and not unreasonably. For it is called a supper when this wedding feast appears in perfect form in the latter times, towards evening, that is, at the end of the ages. But it is called a dinner when even in former times the mystery was revealed, although more obscurely. The oxen and the fattened calves [in Greek, sitista, grain-fattened calves] are the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament is symbolized by the oxen, for it contained animal sacrifice; the New Testament is symbolized by the grain-fattened calves, for now we offer loaves upon the altar, which could truly be called sitista [literally, "formed from wheat"], as the loaves consist of wheat, sitos. God therefore calls us to partake of the good things of both the Old Testament Scriptures and the New. But when you see someone clearly interpreting the divine words, know that he is giving grain-fattened meat. For when he teaches clearly, it is as if he were feeding the unlearned with rich food. No doubt you will ask why He says here, Call them that were called. If they were already invited, why are they going to invite them again? Learn, then, that each of us by nature has been called towards the good, for we are being called by the word of the innate teacher within us. But God also sends us external teachers to call us from without, we who were first called by the word in our nature. The king sent his armies, that is, the Roman legions, and destroyed the disobedient Jews and burnt up their city, Jerusalem, as even the truthful Josephus says. [History of the Jewish Wars]

8-10. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were called were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the lanes off from the highways, and as many as ye shall find, call to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. Since the previous servants, Moses and those with him, and the prophets, did not persuade them, He sends out other servants, the apostles, and they

call the Gentiles who do not walk in the true way but are divided, some here, some there, separated into many ways and doctrines. Indeed, they are to be found along the lanes off from the highways, that is, in great error, delusion, and deviation. They were even at odds among themselves, and were not in the true way, but along the exits, which are the evil doctrines that they taught. For they were not all content with the same doctrines, but some with these and some with those. But perhaps an even better explanation is this: the highway is the life and the manner in which each person lives; the lanes exiting from the highway are doctrines. The pagan Greeks, then, travel along evil highways, that is, they lead reprehensible lives, and from these evil lives they have turned off into godless doctrines, setting up shameful gods as patrons of their own passions. So as the Apostles went forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, they gathered all together, both evil and good, that is, those filled with every wickedness and also those less wicked whom He calls good by comparison to the others.

11-14. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind his hands and feet, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. The entry into the wedding takes place without distinction of persons, for by grace alone we have all been called, good and bad alike; but the life thereafter of those who enter shall not be without examination, for indeed the king makes an exceedingly careful examination of those found to be sullied after entering into the faith. Let us tremble, then, when we understand that if one does not lead a pure life, faith alone benefits him not at all. For not only is he cast out of the wedding feast, but he is sent away into the fire. Who is he that is wearing filthy garments? It is he who is not clothed with compassion, goodness, and brotherly love. For there are many who deceive themselves with vain hopes, thinking that they shall attain the kingdom of heaven, and they include themselves among the assembly of the dinner guests, thinking great things of themselves. Being justified in regard to that unworthy man, the Lord demonstrates these two things to us; first, that He loves mankind, and secondly, that we ought not to pass judgement on anyone, even if they sin openly, unless they have been reproved for their sin. The Lord then says

to His servants, the angels of punishment, Bind his hands and feet, that is, the soul's powers of action. For in this present age is the time to act and to do, but in the age to come all of the soul's powers of action are bound, and a man cannot then do any good thing to outweigh his sins. Gnashing of teeth is the meaningless repentance that will then take place. Many are called, for God calls many, indeed, all, but few are chosen. Few are saved and found worthy to be chosen by God. It is God's part to call, but to become one of the chosen or not, is our part. He shows, then, that this parable was spoken for the Jews who were called but were not chosen, as they did not listen.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Master, Which is the Great Commandment?

Matthew 22: 35-46

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

34-40. But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Out of immeasurable spite this man comes forward to put the Lord to the test. For when they saw the Sadducees put to shame and the Lord praised for His wisdom, they came forward to test Him to see if He would add something to the first commandment, and thus give them the chance to accuse Him of being an innovator who corrects the law. But the Lord discloses their malice, and because they came not to learn, but rather, devoid of love, to show their envy and their spite, He reveals to them the exceedingly great love expressed by the commandments. And He teaches that we ought not to love God partially, but to give all of ourselves to God. For we perceive these three distinctions of the human soul: the vegetative, the animal, and the rational. When the soul grows and is nourished and begets what is like unto it, it resembles the plants; when it experiences anger or desire, it is like the animals; when it understands, it is called rational. See, then, how these three facets are indicated here. Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart—this is the animal part of a man; and with all thy soul [or life]—this is the vegetative part of a man, for plants are alive and animate; and with all thy mind—this is the rational. So one must love God with all one's soul, that is, attend to Him with all the parts and powers of one's soul. This is the first and great commandment, training us in piety. The second is like unto it, exhorting us to do to other men what is just and right. For there are two things which lead to perdition, evil doctrines and a corrupt life. Lest we fall into unholy doctrines, we must love God; so that we do not lead a corrupt life, we must love our neighbor. [Levit. 19:18] For

he who loves his neighbor fulfills all the commandments, and he who fulfills all the commandments, loves God. So by means of each other these two commandments are welded together and united, containing within themselves all the other commandments. Who is it that loves God and his neighbor, but also steals, or bears grudges, or commits adultery, or murders, or fornicates? This lawyer, then, at the onset came to test Him but then, hearing Christ's answer, he amended his ways, and the Lord praised him, as Mark also says that Jesus looked at him with love, and said, Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven. [Mk. 12:34]

41-46. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither dared any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions. Since they thought He was a mere man, He overturns their belief and by means of the prophecy of David [Ps. 109:1] teaches the truth, that He is also the Lord, proclaiming His own divinity. For when the Pharisees said that the Christ was the son of David, that is, a mere man, He says, How then does David name Him Lord, and he does not simply name Him Lord, but in spirit, that is, as revealed to him by the grace of the Spirit? He does not say this to deny that He is the son of David, but to show that He is not a mere man, descended only from the Davidic seed. The Lord asks these questions so that if they would answer, "We do not know," they might ask and learn; or if they would answer the truth, that they might believe; or if they could not answer, that they might be put to shame and leave, no longer daring to interrogate Him.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Talents
Matthew 25: 14-30
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

14-19. It is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and handed over to them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to each one according to his own strength; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them another five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained another two. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. Having said above, "You do not know the day when the Lord will come," He adds this parable as well, showing that He will come suddenly. For like a man about to travel into a far country, so too the Lord has called His own servants and distributed His property among them, some to one, some to another. Christ, Who became man for our sake, is the man travelling into a far country, in reference either to His ascent into the heavens or to the length of time that He is long-suffering and does not summarily demand works from us, but waits. His servants are those who have been entrusted with the ministry of the Word, such as bishops, priests, and deacons, and who have received spiritual gifts, some greater, some lesser, each one according to his own strength, that is, according to the measure of his faith and purity. For into the vessel which I will offer to God, He places His gift to me. If it is a small vessel, a small gift; if it is a large vessel, a large gift. Immediately he who had received the five talents went and traded with them. See the speed with which he acts, not in the least bit negligent, but immediately trading and doubling what he had received. Whether a man be gifted with speech, wealth, the authority of kingship, or any other power or skill, if he desires to benefit not only himself but others as well, he doubles what has been given to him. But he who buries the talent is he who cares only for his own benefit and not for that of others, and he is condemned. But if you should see an intelligent and skilled man misusing his intelligence in various pursuits, in deceitfulness, and in earthly affairs, you may say that such a man has buried his talent in the earth, that

is, in earthly matters. But after a long time he who bestowed the silver talent returns. The silver talent may be in the form of a silver tongue, the gift of eloquence, for the eloquence of God is as silver that is tried by fire. Or, the silver talent may be any gift that makes one brilliant and glorious. He comes and demands a reckoning from those who received.

20-30. And so he that had received five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewn; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewn: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money with the bankers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with increase. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have in abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Both of those who had worked and traded with the talents given to them are praised equally by the master, each one hearing, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Good we understand here to mean "loving all mankind" and "without spite," he who imparts his own goodness to his neighbors. Those who have shown themselves to be faithful over a few things are made rulers over many things. But even if we are deemed worthy of gifts in this life, that is nothing in comparison to the good things that are to come. The joy of the Lord is the unending gladness which God has, rejoicing in His works, as David says. [Ps. 103:31] With such a joy do the saints also rejoice in their works, just as

the sinners grieve over their own deeds and regret them. The saints have the Lord as their wealth and they rejoice in Him. See that he who received the five talents and he who received two were deemed worthy of the same good things. Though a man may have received but a few things, if he is a good steward even of his small gift, he will enjoy the same honor as he who was deemed worthy of, and accomplished, great things. For each one, according to what he has received, is seen to be perfect to the degree that he accomplishes what he has been given to do. Such are the good servants; but the wicked and slothful servant justifies himself differently, in a manner befitting to him. For he calls his master hard, as many today call their teachers "hard" or "exacting." It is indeed exacting to look for obedience from men, for God did not create obedience within man, nor did He sow in him an obedient disposition, [but instead God gave man free will]. This is what the unprofitable servant means when he says, "You reap where you have not sown," that is, You require an obedient disposition from all men, although You have implanted in no man an obedient disposition. When the servant says that the master is hard, he condemns himself. For the servant ought all the more to have been diligent knowing that his master was hard and severe. For if the master required this of others, so too would the master require this of him. And you, O unprofitable servant, ought also to have multiplied what you had received and made disciples from whom I, the Master, could demand what is due. Christ calls disciples bankers, for both exactly account for what has been delivered to them. What is the increase which He requires of the disciples? The showing of works transacted. For the disciple who receives the word from the teacher, must keep the word and give it back in its entirety; but the disciple also adds to it the interest, which is the doing of good. So God takes the gift away from that wicked and slothful servant. He who has received a gift by which to benefit others, and does not so use it, forfeits the gift itself. Do you see that he who applies the greater diligence draws to himself the greater gift? To him who has the greater diligence, more grace will be given and in abundance. But from him who is not diligent, even the gift which he thinks he has will be taken away. For he who is not diligent and does not work and trade with what he has received, does not have the gift, but only appears to have it. He has blotted it out by his neglect.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Woman of Canaan
Matthew 15: 21-28
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Matthew
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

21-23. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. But He answered her not a word. Why did He not allow the disciples to go by way of the Gentiles [Mt. 10:5], while He Himself went to Tyre and Sidon, which were Gentile cities? Learn then, that He did not go there to preach, since, as Mark says, He hid Himself [Mk. 7:24]. But rather, when He saw that the Pharisees had not accepted His words about food, He went to the Gentiles. The woman said, "Have mercy, not on my daughter, who is unconscious, but on me who am suffering and experiencing these terrible things." And she did not say, "Come and heal," but Have mercy. He did not answer her a word, not out of contempt, but to show that He had come, in the first place, for the Jews, and to shut the mouths of those Jews who might later slanderously accuse Him of doing good to Gentiles. He also refrained from answering her so that He might reveal the persevering faith of the woman.

23-24. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am sent only unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The disciples were oppressed by the cry of the woman and so begged Christ to send her away. They did this, not out of a lack of compassion, but rather with the desire to persuade the Lord to have mercy on her. But He said, "I am sent only unto to the Jews, who are lost sheep because of the wickedness of those shepherds to whom they have been entrusted." In this manner He discloses more fully the faith of the woman.

25-27. Then came she and fell prostrate before Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Yea, Lord: yet even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. When the woman saw that her

advocates, the Apostles, had not succeeded, again she approaches fervently and calls upon the Lord. Christ speaks of her as a dog, because the Gentiles led an unclean life and were involved with the blood of meat sacrificed to idols, while the Jews He speaks of as children. But she answers wisely and indeed profoundly, "Even though I am a dog and not worthy to receive a loaf of bread, that is, a mighty act and a great sign, nevertheless grant this to me which is a small thing by comparison with Thy power, though to me it is great. For crumbs are not large in the eyes of those who eat loaves, but to dogs they are large, and they feed on them."

28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Now Jesus shows the reason why He put off healing her at the beginning: So that the faith and understanding of the woman might be made manifest, Christ did not immediately give His assent at the beginning and even drove her away. But now when her faith has been revealed she hears the words of praise, Great is thy faith. By saying, Be it unto thee even as thou wilt, Christ showed that if she had not had faith she would not have obtained her request. So, too, if we desire to obtain something, nothing prevents us from obtaining what we desire. Notice that even if saints should ask on our behalf, as the Apostles did for the woman, still, we accomplish even more when we ask for ourselves. The Canaanite woman is also a symbol of the Church gathered from among the Gentiles. For Gentiles who first were even driven away, later were advanced to the rank of sons and were deemed worthy of the Bread, I mean, the Body of the Lord; while the Jews became dogs, thinking that they were being fed by the crumbs, that is, the minute and insignificant details of the letter of the law. Tyre means "besieged," Sidon, "they who hunt," and Canaan, "made ready by humility." Therefore the Gentiles, who were besieged by evil in that the demons were among them hunting for souls, were also made ready by humility. For the righteous were made ready for the heights of the kingdom of God.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Miraculous Catch of Fish

Luke 5:1-11

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-11. And it came to pass, that, as the multitude pressed against Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the boats, which was Simons, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the boat. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, 0 Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all, and followed Him. The Lord flees glory, which all the more pursues Him. When the crowd pressed against Him, He entered the boat, so that from the boat He could teach those standing on the shore, and everyone would be in front of Him, rather than some coming towards Him from behind. And when He had finished teaching the people, He did not leave the owner of the boat without payment, but gave him a two-fold benefit: He bestowed on him an abundance of fish, and He made him His disciple. Marvel at how wisely the Lord arranges our salvation, drawing to Himself each one by means of the things that are his own and with which he is familiar. As He had attracted the Magi with a star, so now He draws the fishermen by means of fish. See the gentleness of Christ, how He does not command, but requests that Peter put out from land. See also the obedience of Peter, how he welcomes into

his boat a man whom he did not know, and obeys Him in everything. When the Lord tells him to launch out into the deep, Peter does not become exasperated and leave Him, nor does he reply, "I have toiled the whole night and gained nothing, and now I should obey you and do it all again?" Peter said nothing like this, but instead, At Thy word I will let down the net. Such was the warmth of his trust even before he had faith. And he caught so great a number of fish that he was not able to haul them in, and he beckoned to his companions in the other boat. He calls them with a signal, because his astonishment at the catch was so great that he could not even speak. Out of great reverence for Jesus, Peter begs Him not to remain in the boat, and calls himself a sinner who is not worthy to be with Him. You may also understand these things in a spiritual sense. The boat is the synagogue of the Jews. Peter represents the teachers of the law. For the teachers of the law also toiled the whole night before Christ came (the time before Christs sojourning on earth was indeed night) and took in nothing. But when Christ came, and it became day, the teachers of the law were replaced by the Apostles who, at His word, that is, at His command, let down the net of the Gospel in which they caught so great a number of men that the Apostles could not haul in the catch by themselves. And so they beckon to their partners and companions and together pull in the net. These are the pastors and teachers of the Church in every generation who teach and interpret the words of the Apostles, laboring with the Apostles to catch mankind. Consider also the words, Let down the net. The net is the Gospel: like the fisherman’s net, which is a lowly and commonplace thing, the Gospel is composed of humble, everyday words which reach down and condescend to the simplicity of the people. This is why it is said that the net is let down. If any one should say that letting down the net also indicates the depth of meaning of the Gospel, neither would he be off the mark. Therefore the words of the prophet have also been fulfilled, Behold, I will send many fishermen, saith the Lord, and they shall fish for them; and afterward I will send many hunters, and they shall hunt for them. [Jer. 16:16] The fishermen are the holy Apostles, and the hunters are the leaders and teachers of the Church in each generation.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

As Ye Would that Men Should Do to You
Luke 6:31-36
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria
[In the following commentary, some preceding verses have been included, because Bl. Theophylact comments on them as a whole.]

27-36. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer alsothe other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy tunic also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods askthem not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same.And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the sons of the MostHigh; for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. The Apostles were about to be sent out to preach and many persecutors and plotters awaited them. If the Apostles were fearful and dismayed by persecution, they might want to protect themselves from their persecutors by keeping silent and not teaching. If that happened, the radiant sun of the Gospel would be extinguished. In anticipation of this, the Lord exhorts the Apostles not to give way to defensive measures against their enemies, but instead bravely to endure all things, even insults and murderous plots. This is what He Himself did on the Cross, saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. [Lk.23:34] To prove to the Apostles that this commandment to love ones enemies is possible to keep, He then says, "What you want to be done to you, do the same to others; and be to others that kind of person you want others to be to you." If you want your enemies to be hard, unfeeling, and angry towards you, then be the same yourself to them. But if you want them

to be kind and compassionate towards you, and not to remember wrongs, do not think that it is impossible for you yourself to be the same towards them. Do you see this natural law which is written in our hearts? That is why the Lord also said, In those days I will surely put My laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts. [Jer. 38:33] Then He adds another compelling reason to keep this commandment: if you love those who love you, you are like the sinners and the Gentiles; but if you love those who do evil to you, you are like God, Who is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Which do you desire—to be like sinners or to be like God? Do you see the divine teaching? First He persuaded you by means of the natural law: what you want to be done to you, do to others. Then He persuades you with the result and the reward—He promises that you will become like God.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Raising the Son of the Widow of Nain

Luke 7:11-16

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

11-16. And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a citycalled Nan; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people. Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city waswith her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us; and, that God hath visited His people. Because the Lord, while not even present, had healed the centurions servant, He now performs another even more remarkable miracle. He does this so that no one could say, "What is remarkable about the healing of the centurions servant? Perhaps the servant would not have died in any case." This is why the Lord now raises up the dead man as he was being carried out for burial. He does not perform the miracle by His word alone, but also touches the bier, teaching us that His very Body is life. Because God the Word Who gives life to all things Himself became flesh, therefore His flesh itself is likewise life-creating, and takes away death and corruption. The dead man sat up and began to speak, so that some would not think that his rising was only an apparition. Sitting up and speaking are definite proofs of resurrection from the dead—how can a lifeless body sit up and speak? You may also understand the widow to mean the soul which has suffered the loss of its husband, the Word of God Which sows the good seed. The son of such a widow is the mind which is dead and is being carried outside the city, that is, outside the heavenly Jerusalem which is the land of the living. The Lord then takes pity and touches the bier. The bier which carries the dead mind is the body. And indeed the body is like a tomb, as the ancient Greeks said, calling the body [sma] a burial mound [sma], which means a tomb. Having touched the body, the Lord then raises the mind, restoring its youth and vigor. And after the young man, meaning the mind, has sat up,

raised from the tomb of sin, he will begin to speak, that is, to teach others. While he is in the grip of sin, he cannot speak or teach—who would believe him?

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Sower
Luke 8:5-15
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

4-10. And when many people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the way; and it was trodden down, and the winged creatures of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it wassprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And Hisdisciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. What David said of old, speaking prophetically in the person of Christ, has now come to pass: I will open My mouth in parables. [Ps. 77:2] The Lord speaks in parables for many reasons: to make His listeners more attentive and to stir up their minds to seek the meaning of what is said. For we are apt to be curious about sayings that are obscure in meaning and to disregard sayings that are clear. He also speaks in parables so that those who are unworthy may not understand what is said concerning spiritual mysteries. And there are many other reasons why He speaks in parables. A sower, therefore, went out, that is, the Son of God went forth from the Fathers bosom, from the hidden fastness of the Father, and became manifest to all. Who went out? He Who is ever sowing. The Son of God never ceases to sow in our souls. Not only by His teaching, but by all of creation and by the events of our daily lives, He plants good seed in our souls. He went out, not to slay trespassers or to burn off the stubble, but to sow. For there are many reasons why a farmer might go forth, besides to plant. He went out to sow His own seed: the word of teaching was His own, and not another’s. The prophets had spoken, not their own words, but the words of the Holy Spirit. This is why they said, Thus saith the Lord. But Christ had His own seed to sow. When He taught, He did not say, "Thus saith the Lord," but, "I say unto you." As He sowed,

that is, as He taught, some seed fell along the road. He did not say that the sower threw the seed along the road, but instead that some fell there. Christ the Sower sows and teaches, and His word falls upon his listeners everywhere, and it is they who show themselves to be like a road, or a rock, or thorns, or good soil. When the disciples ask about the parable, the Lord says, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, that is, unto you who desire to learn, for everyone that asketh, receiveth. [Mt. 7:8] To the others who are not worthy of the mysteries, He speaks obscurely. They think that they see, but they do not; they hear, but they do not understand. And this is to their benefit. The Lord hides these things from them so that they will not fall under greater condemnation for understanding the mysteries and then disregarding them. He who understands, and then disregards, deserves a more severe punishment.

11-15. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those along the way are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares of riches and of pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patient endurance. Here are described three types of those who are not saved. First, there are those along the way, who do not receive and accept the word at all. Just as a pathway, which is well trodden and compacted, cannot receive the seed because it is hard, so also those who are hardened in their hearts do not accept the word at all. Though they hear the word, they give it no heed. Next there are those on the rock who hear the word, and then do not endure temptations because of human weakness, and deny the faith. The third kind are those who hear the word and then are choked by the cares of life. Three parts, therefore, perish, and only one part is saved. Few are saved; most perish. See that it is not said of those who are choked, that they are choked by riches, but rather by the cares of riches. It is not wealth that harms, but the cares and worries about wealth which fill the mind. Indeed, many have received great benefit from their wealth, when they poured it out to feed the poor. Consider the preciseness of the

Evangelist, when he says of those who are saved, that when they have heard the word, they keep it, in contrast to those who are along the pathway, who do not keep the word; instead, the devil takes the word from them. And they bring forth fruit, in contrast to those who are choked by the thorns, and who bring no fruit to maturity. In truth those whose fruit never ripens bear no fruit at all. Those who bring forth fruit with patient endurance stand in contrast to those who are on the rock, who receive the word but then do not endure the onslaught of temptations and show that they cannot withstand the test. See how the Evangelist says three things concerning those who are saved, that they keep the word, that they bring forth fruit, and that they do so with patient endurance. By these three statements he distinguishes the saved from those who perish—those along the pathway who do not keep the word; those among thorns who bring no fruit to perfection; and those on the rock who do not patiently endure the assault of temptations.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
Luke 16:19-32
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

19-22. And there was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain poor man named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the poor man died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. These words follow closely upon what was said before. Because the Lord first taught, above [Lk. 16:1-13], how we are to be good stewards of wealth, now He appropriately adds this parable which teaches the same thing through the example of the rich man. This is a parable and not, as some have foolishly imagined, something which actually occurred. For good things have not yet been allotted to the righteous, nor punishments to the sinners. The Lord, then, fashioned this story to teach those who show no mercy and give no alms what punishments await them, and to teach the suffering what good things they will enjoy on account of the sufferings they patiently endure in this life. The Lord gave no name to the rich man in this parable, because such a man is not worthy to be remembered by God by name. As the Lord says, through the prophet, nor will I make remembrance of their names through My lips. [Ps. 15:3] But the Lord mentions the poor man by name, for the names of the righteous are inscribed in the Book of Life. There is a story, according to the tradition of the Hebrews, of a certain Lazarus who lived at that time in Jerusalem, whose lot was one of extreme poverty and sickness. Because he was so well known in the city, the Lord uses his name in the parable. The rich man was awash in wealth, so much so that he clothed himself in purple and costly linen. Not only this, but he also luxuriated in every other kind of luxury. For it says that he fared sumptuously, not now and then, but everyday, and not in moderation, but sumptuously, meaning, extravagantly and at great cost. But Lazarus was destitute and grievously diseased, for it says that he was full of sores. It is one thing to be ill; it is another thing to be covered with open sores. But the evil which he suffered goes even further: lying at the

gate of the rich man, he had the added torment of seeing others feasting to excess while he himself starved. He desired to be fed, not with their costly foods, but with the crumbs of these foods, the same crumbs which the dogs ate. He was also destitute of any help, for the dogs licked his sores, and he had no one to drive them away. Lazarus suffered such terrible things. Did he then blaspheme? Did he revile the luxury of the rich man? Did he condemn his callousness? Did he accuse the Divine Providence? He did none of these things, even in thought; rather, he bravely and wisely endured all. How do we know this? From the fact that the angels took him when he died. If he had been a grumbler and blasphemer, he would not have been deemed worthy of such an honor—to be escorted by angels. The rich man also died, and was buried. In truth, while he still lived his soul had been buried alive, entombed within his flesh. Therefore, when he died, his soul was not led away by the angels but was instead borne downwards into hades. He who has never had a single lofty or heavenly thought deserves the lowest place. Thus by saying that he was buried, the Lord implies that the rich mans soul received its portion in the lowest and darkest place.

23-26. And in hades he lift up hiseyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarusin his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus,that he may dipthe tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou arttormented. And beside allthis, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would passfrom hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. When the Lord cast Adam out of paradise He settled him in a place just opposite, so that the continuous sight of paradise before his eyes would keep fresh in his mind the calamity that had befallen him and would arouse in him a sharper sense of his fall from good things. In like manner the Lord condemned the rich man to a place just opposite Lazarus, so that the sight of him in such a blessed state might awaken in the rich man the realization of the good things he lost because of his cruelty. Why was it that he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and not of any other of the righteous? Because Abraham showed hospitality to strangers. The rich man sees Lazarus with Abraham as a reproof of his own inhospitality. Abraham used to draw into

his own house even those who were just passing by, while the rich man overlooked a man who was lying every day within his very courtyard. And why does the rich man address his words to Abraham, and not to Lazarus? Perhaps he was ashamed. It may be that he judged Lazarus to be no different than himself and therefore assumed that Lazarus would bear a grudge for past wrongs. "If I, while enjoying such great prosperity, overlooked him while he was suffering such great afflictions, and did not even give him the crumbs from my table, how much more will he who was thus despised now remember those past wrongs and refuse to grant me any favor?" This is why he addresses his words to Abraham, thinking that the patriarch would be unaware of what had happened. How then does Abraham respond? Does he say, "0 cruel and heartless man! Are you not ashamed? Only now do you remember compassion?" Not this, but rather, Son. Behold a compassionate and holy soul! A certain wise man has said, "Trouble not a soul that has been brought low." This is why Abraham says, Son. By this he also intimates that it is within his power only to speak to him gently, but more than this he is not permitted to do. "That which I have to give, I give you—a voice of compassion. But to go from here to there I cannot, for all things have been shut. And you have received your good things, and in like manner Lazarus evil things." Why does he use the [Greek] word apelabes, thou receivedst, and not the [simpler Greek] word elabes? We say [in Greek] that a recipient receives [apolambanei] those things which are his due. What then do we learn? That even if a man is utterly defiled and has reached the last degree of wickedness, perhaps he has done at least one or two good things. So that even such a man may have some good things, as when he obtains prosperity in this life as his reward, and thus it may be said that he has received these things as his due. Likewise Lazarus received evil things as his due. For perhaps he also did one or two evil things, and he received as his merited reward for these evil things the suffering which he endured in this life. Therefore now he is comforted, while you are in torment. The chasm indicates the separation and the difference that exists between the righteous and the sinners. Just as their choices were far different in this life, so too their dwelling places in the next life are separated by a great distance, each one receiving as his due the reward appropriate to his choices in this life. Mark here a conclusion to be drawn against the Origenists who say that there will be a time when there is an end to hell, that the sinners will be united with the righteous and with

God, and thus that God will become all in all. Let us hear what Abraham says, that they who would pass from hence to you, or from thence to us, cannot. Therefore it is impossible for anyone to go from the place apportioned to the righteous to the place of the sinners, and likewise, Abraham teaches us, it is impossible to go from the place of punishment to the place of the righteous. And Abraham, I presume, is more trustworthy than Origen. (1) What is hades? Some say that it is a place of darkness beneath the earth; others have said that hades is the departure of the soul from that which is seen to that which is unseen and invisible. While the soul is in the body, it is manifest through its own energies [which animate the body], but when the soul has departed from the body it becomes invisible. (2) This is hades, they say. The bosom of Abraham is the enclosure within which are stored up the good things that await the righteous, who after the storm have found the heavenly haven. We use the same word to name those bodies of water on the sea which are shaped like harbors and havens. (3) Mark this as well—on the day of judgment the man who did wrong will see the one he wronged in the glory that is his, and the man who was wronged will likewise see the one who wronged him in that condemnation which befalls him, just as here in this parable the rich man sees Lazarus, and Lazarus, the rich man.

27-31. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my fathers house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. The miserable rich man, having failed in his request for himself, now makes supplication on behalf of others. See how punishment has led him to awareness. He who before had overlooked Lazarus as he lay at his feet now thinks of others who are absent, and begs that Lazarus be sent from the dead to his fathers house. He asks that not just anyone of the dead, but Lazarus in particular, be sent, so that the rich mans brothers might see him crowned with health and glory. They who once saw him in sickness and in dishonor and were witnesses of his poverty, would be witnesses of his glory. From this it is clear that Lazarus would have appeared to them in glory, had it

been necessary to send him as a believable messenger. How then does Abraham reply? They have Moses. "You do not take care of your brothers," he is saying, "as well as He Who created them, God Himself. For He has appointed ten thousand teachers for them." But the rich man answers, Nay, father. Since he himself had heard the Scriptures and did not believe, considering the readings to be myths, he suspected that it was the same for his brothers. Judging them by what he knew to be true of himself, he said that they gave no more heed to the Scriptures than he had, but that if one should rise from the dead, then they would believe. There are those even now who say the same: "Who knows what is in hades? Who has ever come from there to tell us?" But let them hear Abraham who says that if we do not give heed to the Scriptures, we will not believe even those who come from hades. The Jews showed this to be true. Because they gave no heed to the Scriptures, they did not believe when they saw the dead resurrected, but even attempted to slay that other Lazarus who was four days dead. Many of the dead arose at the Lords Crucifixion, yet this only intensified the Jews murderous assault against the Apostles. If raising the dead would truly help us to believe, the Lord would do this often. But there is no help so great as the close study of the Scriptures. For the devil by trickery has appeared to raise the dead and by this means has deceived the foolish; and, concerning those in hades, he spreads doctrines worthy of his own wickedness. But no such trickery can prevail against those who make wise study of the Scriptures. For the Scriptures are a lamp and a light [see Prov. 6:23], and when light shines, the thief appears and is discovered. Therefore, let us believe the Scriptures and not seek out resurrections from the dead. The parable may also be understood in a more figurative sense. The rich man represents the Hebrew people. Of old this people was rich in all knowledge and wisdom, and in the words of God which are more precious than gold and many costly stones. And this people was clothed in purple and fine linen, having both kingship and priesthood, being a royal priesthood to God [Ex. 19:6]. The purple signifies kingship and the fine linen priesthood, for the Levites used fine linen cloth for the priestly vestments. The Hebrews fared sumptuously everyday. Everyday, morning and evening, they offered sacrifice, which was called the constant offering [endelechismos, Ex. 29:38, 42]. Lazarus represents the people from among the Gentiles, destitute of divine grace and wisdom, lying before the gates. For the Gentiles were not permitted to enter the house of God; this was considered a defilement, as

when, in the Book of Acts, an outcry was made against Paul for bringing Gentiles into the temple and defiling that holy place [Acts 21]. The Gentiles were covered with the sores of festering sin, on which impudent dogs, the demons, were feeding. For our sores are pleasure to the demons. And the Gentiles longed for the crumbs which fell from the table of the rich man. They had no share at all of that bread which strengtheneth mans heart [Ps. 103:17], and they were in need of those most subtle and refined particles of the rational food, like the Canaanite woman who desired to be fed from the crumbs, even though she was a Gentile [Mt. 15] What then? The Hebrew people died to God, and their bones, which made no movement towards the good, became stiff in death. But Lazarus, the Gentile people, died to sin, and the Jews, who died in their sins, burn with the flame of spite. They are envious, as the Apostle says, that the Gentiles have been accepted unto faith [see Rm. 11:11], and that the people of the nations, who before were destitute and dishonored, are now in the bosom of Abraham, the father of the nations, and rightly so. For Abraham, himself a Gentile, believed in God, and changed from idolatry to the knowledge of God. Therefore it is right that those who share in his change and in his faith should also find rest in his bosom, and inherit his same portion, dwelling place, and store of good things. The Jew desires just one drop of the old sprinklings and purifications of the law in order to cool his tongue, that he might have the boldness to say to us that the law is still in effect. But he does not obtain his desire. For the law was until John the Forerunner and from then sacrifice and offering hast Thou not desired, as the prophet foretold [Ps. 39:9] And Daniel foretold that the anointing [chrisma] shall be destroyed [Dan. 9:26], and prophecy shall be sealed [Dan. 12:4, 9], meaning, that prophecy shall cease and be closed. But you, 0 reader, must also understand the moral meaning of this parable. Do not be rich in wickedness and overlook your mind which is starved and cast down, although it was created to be borne aloft. Do not let it wander outside, nor let it lie idly on the ground, but lead it within and let it act. Then there will be in you the working of the mind and the spirit, and not merely the feasting of the flesh. Likewise, there are other elements of this parable which may easily be understood for your moral benefit.

1. Origen's teaching of apokatastasis, the ultimate restoation and reconciliation of everyone, even Satan, was condemned as heresy at the

Fifth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 553 A.D.

2. BI. Theophylact here provides the connection between the Greek word, ades, hades, and its etymological root, aeides, invisible.

3. The Greek word kolpos means both bosom and bay.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

The Legion of Demons and Herd of Swine
Luke 8:26-39
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

26-33. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is across from Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man, possessed by demons for a long time, who wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not. (For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he broke the bands, and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many demons were entered into him. And he besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them. Then went the demons out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. See how the demon is torn between two wicked passions: impudence and fear. When he says, What have I to do with Thee? he shows the impudence of a shameless slave; when he says, I beseech Thee, he shows his fear. He was dwelling among the tombs because he wanted to instill in men the false suspicion that the souls of those who have died become demons. The demons ask not to be cast into the abyss, but that they be permitted to remain a while longer upon the earth. The Lord permits them to remain upon the earth so that they might fight and contend with men, and thus render men tested veterans. If man had no adversaries, there would be no struggles and contests; and if there were no contests, there would be no crowns of victory. There is a more spiritual sense which you should learn as well: the man who has demons within him and wears no garment and makes his home outside the house, is anyone who does evil and demonic deeds, who has stripped himself of his baptismal robe, and dwells outside the Church. Such a man is not worthy to enter into the

Church, but instead he lives in the tombs of dead and rotting deeds, for example, in brothels and in the chambers of publicans and graft. These are indeed tombs of iniquity.

34-39. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the demons were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the demons was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the boat, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the demons were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and tell what great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done unto him. When those who had been feeding the swine fled into the city, it became an opportunity for salvation for the Gadarenes, but they did not understand. They ought to have marvelled at the Saviour's power and believed in Him. The Evangelist says that they besought Him to depart from them, instead of calling upon Him in supplication. They did this out of fear of suffering another loss like that of the swine. But the man who had been healed shows indisputable proof of his healing. That he had been healed in his mind is shown by the fact that he now both recognizes Jesus and begs His permission to be with Him. For he was afraid, it would seem, that the demons would again easily assault him when he was separated from Jesus. But the Lord shows him that even if he is not with Jesus, the Lord's grace can shelter him from demonic attack. The Lord says to him, Return to thine own house, and tell what great things God hath done unto thee. By not saying, "what great things I have done unto thee," the Lord gives us an example of humility and teaches us that we should attribute all our accomplishments to God. But though the Lord had commanded him to tell what things God had done for him, he told instead what things Jesus had done for him, so great was his gratitude. Therefore when you do something good for someone, do not desire it to become public knowledge; but he who is the beneficiary of that good deed ought to

be moved by gratitude to tell it to others, even though you do not want him to do so.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Jairus' Daughter and the Woman With an Issue of Blood
Luke 8:41-56
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

40-44. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the multitude gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was ruler of the synagogue: andhe fell down at Jesus feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went, the multitude thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, who had spent allher living upon physicians, and could not be healed by any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. Jesus returned from the country of the Gadarenes, and the multitude was waiting for Him, eager for both His teaching and His miracles. Then He was approached by a certain ruler of the synagogue, a man who was neither poor nor insignificant, but the foremost of society. The Evangelist even gives the man's name, so that the miracle might become the more renowned through this confirmable evidence of its truth. In his great need this man falls down before Jesus, although even without the urgency of this need, he ought to have fallen down and acknowledged Jesus as God. Nevertheless, affliction can compel a man to turn to what is better, as David says when he speaks of the horse or mule which has no understanding, whose jaws thou must afflict with bit and bridle when they come not nigh unto thee [Ps. 31:9]. (1) But as Jesus went along the way to the house of Jairus, a woman drew near to Him who showed exceedingly great faith. She approached and touched the border of His gannent with the firm faith that if she could only touch His clothing, she would be made whole. Immediately the flow of blood stopped. Like a man who brings his eye close to a bright light, or brings a dry stick close to fire, and they immediately react, so also the woman brought her faith close to Him Who has power to heal, and immediately she obtained healing. She gave no thought to anything else, neither the many years of her illness, nor the failure of her doctors. She only believed and was made whole. Understand that first she touched Jesus noetically, and only then did she touch Him bodily.

45-48. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that power is gone out of Me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, take courage: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. The Lord desires to show the womans faith to all the people so that they might become imitators of her, and also so that Jairus might have good hope for his daughter. Therefore He makes manifest what had happened in secret and asks who it was that touched Him. Peter, being bold, scolds the Lord for His question, saying, "So many people throng Thee, and yet sayest Thou, Who touched Me?" But he did not understand what the Lord was asking. The Lord was inquiring, "Who touched Me with faith?" and not simply, "Whose hand touched Me?" Just as one man has ears with which he hears, while another has ears but does not hear, so also one man touches with faith, while another may draw near but his heart is far away. The Lord knows that it was the woman, but He asks the question, as I have said, in order to reveal her faith and to give hope to the ruler of the synagogue. He asks, and thus draws attention to the woman. For I perceive that power is gone out of Me, He says, and rightly so. The prophets did not have power that went out from them; instead, they worked miracles by the grace of God. But Jesus is the source of every good thing and the source of all power, and He indeed has power that goes out from Him. The Lord grants the woman a double healing: He first heals her sickness and then dispels the fear from her trembling soul by saying, Daughter, take courage.

49-56. While He yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogues house, saying to Him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole. And when He came into the house, He permitted no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she wasdead. And He put them all out, and took her by

the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her food. And her parents were astonished: but He charged them that they tell no man what was done. When Jesus heard a man say to the ruler of the synagogue, trouble not the Master, He did not wait for the ruler of the synagogue to speak to Him, but speaks first Himself, so that the ruler of the synagogue could not say, "I have no need for You; the evil deed has already happened; behold she has died, the one whom we expected You to heal," or any such words as these. For he did not believe, and was a Jew. Christ, therefore, speaks first and says, "Fear not; only believe. Consider the woman who had the issue of blood. Imitate her and you will not miss the mark." He permits only Peter, John, and James to enter because they were the Lords favorites and chief of the Apostles, and because they were able to keep silent concerning the miracle. The Lord did not want to reveal Himself to many before it was time, perhaps because of the spite of the Jews. Thus He hid most of His deeds so that the Jews would not become inflamed with envy and thus liable to judgment. We ought also to do the same; when someone becomes envious of us, let us not reveal our accomplishments to him, so as not to wound him and cause him to be even more envious and cast him into sin. Instead, we should strive to go unnoticed by him. The Lord said, she is not dead, but sleepeth, calling death sleep because He was about to raise her from the dead as if from sleep. Those who heard Him laughed Him to scorn, so that the miracle would be all the more miraculous. In order that later they would not be able to claim that she was not dead, but had been asleep, the Lord arranged by divine economy that He should first be mocked when He said that she was not dead but asleep. Thus He shut the mouths of those who wanted to slander Him, for it was so clear that she was dead that they even mocked Him when He said that she was not dead. He put them all outside, perhaps to teach us not to crave glory and not to do anything for show, and also to teach that when someone is about to work a miracle, he ought not to be in the midst of many people, but alone and undistracted. Then the Lord brought back the spirit of the young girl. He did not put another soul into her but made the same soul which had slipped away return to her body again. He commanded that she be given something to eat, to provide even greater assurance and confirmation that she had risen from the dead. These things may also be understood in this manner: the woman with the issue of blood represents every soul which pours forth bloody and

murderous sin. For each and every sin is the murderer and slayer of the soul. When this soul, therefore, touches the clothing of Jesus, when it touches, that is, His Incarnation, believing that the Son of God took on human flesh, then the soul is healed. And this is possible even if someone should be a ruler of the synagogue, that is, if someone has a mind which rules over the many things it has collected in its greed. (2) Then the daughter of that mind, its thought, is sick. But let that mind only call upon Jesus and believe, and his thought will be made whole.

1. . The translation here of this particular verse differs somewhat from that of the Psalter published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, which we usually cite. See the Introduction, p. 1, of the present volume.

2. The word synagogue [synagoge] is derived from the verb synago which means to bring together, whether it be people in an assembly or things in a collection. Bl. Theophylact here plays on both senses of the word.

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Good Samaritan
Luke 10:25-37
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

25-28. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. This lawyer was not only arrogant and proud but also deceitful, as is shown by what follows. He comes to put the Lord to the test, and he imagined that he would trip the Lord by the answer which He gave. But the Lord leads him to the very law of which the lawyer boasted such great knowledge. See how precisely the law commands us to love God. Man is more perfect than all other created things, being in some respect like all created things, but in addition having something exceptional. For example, there is a part of man that is like stone, for he has hair and nails which are unfeeling, like a stone. And he is also in part like a plant, in that he grows and is nourished and engenders his own kind, just as plants do. He is in part like the irrational animals, in that he has emotions, and becomes angry, and desires. But unlike all other animals, he is also in part like God, in that he has a mind. Therefore the law teaches that man must give each and every part of himself entirely to God, and must expend all the forces of his life in loving God. When the law says, with all thy heart, it speaks of that force of human life that is purely physical and organic, a force likewise present in plant life. When the law says, with all thy soul, it speaks of that force of human life which feels, a force likewise present in animals. When the law says, with all thy mind, it speaks of that power which is unique to man, the intellect. With all thy strength means that we must use all these powers to pull [our stubborn selves to God]. We must harness even the organic, plant-like force of our soul to the love of Christ. How? With strength, and not faintheartedly. We must also subject, with strength, the power of all our senses to the love of Christ. As for the power of our rational soul, this too we must subject with all our strength to the love of Christ. So then, we must

give all of ourselves to God, and we must subject our biological powers, our sensory powers, and our intellectual powers to the love of God. And thy neighbour as thyself .The law was not yet able to teach perfection on account of the spiritual immaturity of its listeners. Therefore the law urged a man only to love his neighbor as himself. But Christ taught man to love ones neighbor more than oneself. For He says, Greater love hath no man than this, thata man lay down his life for his friends. [Jn. 15:13] Therefore He says to the lawyer, Thou hast answered right. Since you are still subject to the law, you have answered correctly, for your thoughts are in accordance with the old law.

29-37. But he, wanting to show himself to be righteous, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And as it happened there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan journeyed and came to him: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the innkeeper, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. After the Saviour praised him, the lawyers pride and arrogance knew no bounds. That is why he said, And who is my neighbour? that is, "Who is close to me?" (1) He imagined himself to be righteous and thought that there was no one like him and that no one could come close to him in virtue. He imagined that a righteous man could have as "neighbor" only another righteous man. Therefore wanting to show himself to be righteous and superior to all men, he says haughtily, And who is my neighbour? But the Saviour as Maker of all, knowing that all men are one creation, defines neighbour not according to deeds or merits, but according to human nature. "Do not think," He says, "that just because you are righteous, no one is like

you. All mankind shares the same nature and thus all men are your neighbors. Therefore, you too must be a neighbor to them and be near to all, not by location, but by the disposition of your heart and by your care for others. Therefore I present to you a Samaritan as an example, to show you that no matter how different or foreign he may have seemed, he was the neighbor of the one in need of mercy. You also must show yourself to be a neighbor by your compassion, and even unasked you must go to the help of others." Thus we learn from this parable to be always ready to show mercy and to make haste to be near those in need of our help. But this parable also teaches us the goodness of God towards man. It was our human nature that was going down from Jerusalem, that is, was descending from tranquillity and peace, for Jerusalem means vision of peace. Where was man descending? To Jericho, a place sunk down low and suffocating with heat, that is, to a life of passions. See that He did not say, "went down," but, was going down. For fallen human nature is always inclined downwards, not just once of old, but continuously going down towards passionate life. And man fell among thieves, that is, among demons. For if a man did not come down from that high place where the spiritual mind rules, he would not fall among demons who strip the man, depriving him of his raiment of virtue, and then inflict the wounds of sin. They strip us of every good thought and of Gods protection, and when we are thus naked, they lay on the stripes of sin. They leave human nature half dead, that is, with a mortal body and an immortal soul. And human nature was left only half dead in the further sense that man did not lie completely in despair, but hoped to find salvation in Christ. Human nature had not yet been slain outright; though death had entered the world through Adams transgression, death was soon to be abolished by the righteousness of Christ. The priest and the Levite signify the law and the prophets, who desired to make human nature righteous, but were unable to do so. For it is not possible, says Paul, that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. [Heb. 10:4] The law and the prophets took pity on man and sought to heal him. But they were defeated by the severity of the wounds of sin, and they passed into the past. This is what it means that they passed by. The law came and stood over the fallen man, but since it could not heal him, it turned away in revulsion and went on theother side. See that the words as it happened also have a certain spiritual meaning. For indeed the law was not given for the express purpose [of healing the wounds of sin, for Christ, not the law, was to be the healing of Adams

wound]. Instead, the law was given [as a stopgap measure] on account of human weakness which could not immediately receive the mystery of Christ. This is why He says that it was as it happened, or, as we say, "by chance," and not intentionally, that the priest, signifying the law, came to heal the man. But our Lord and God, Who for our sake was made a curse [Gal. 3:13], and was called a Samaritan [Jn. 8:48], journeyed to us, that is, His journey had as its very purpose and goal our healing. He did not just catch a glimpse of us as He happened to pass by: He actually came to us and lived together with us and spoke to us. Therefore He at once bound up our wounds. He no longer permitted wickedness to operate in us freely and at will, but He bound and restrained our sinfulness and poured on oil and wine. Oil is the word of teaching which exhorts us to virtue by the promise of good things; wine is the word of teaching leading us towards virtue by the fear of punishment. For example, when you hear the Lord say, Come unto Me and I will give you rest [Mt. 11:28], this is the oil of gladness and rest. And it is the same when He says, Come ye and inherit the kingdom prepared for you [Mt. 25:34]. But when He says, "Depart into darkness [Mt. 25:30], this is the wine of sharp teaching which stings as it cleanses our wounds. You may also understand it this way: oil represents Christs human actions and wine represents His divine actions, for I may say that the Lord acted at times as a man and at times as God. When He ate and drank and relaxed, not displaying the austerity and asceticism of John the Forerunner, this is the oil. But His extraordinary fasting, His walking on the water, and all His mighty deeds of divine power, these are the wine. We can compare Christs divinity to wine, which no one could tolerate if it were poured onto a wound, unless it were tempered with oil, that is, accompanied by His humanity. Therefore, since Christ has saved us both by His divinity and by His humanity, this is why it is said that oil and wine were poured out. And at every baptism those who are baptized are delivered from wounds of the soul when they are chrismated with the oil of myrrh and then immediately commune of the divine Blood. The Lord lifted up our wounded nature upon His own beast of burden, namely, upon His own Body. For He made us members of Himself and communicants of His own Body; and when we were lying down, wounded, He raised us up to His own dignity, making us one Body with Himself. The inn is the Church, which receives all. (2) But the law did not receive all. For the law says, the Ammanite and the Moabite shall not enter into the Church of God [Dt. 23:3] But now, from every tribe

and people, God accepts those who fear Him and who desire to believe and to become a member of Christs Body, the Church. God receives all, even sinners and publicans. See the preciseness of His expression, how He says that the Samaritan brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Before he brought him to the inn, he had only bound his wounds. What then am I saying? That when the Church had been established, becoming the inn which receives all, and was increased by the faith of nearly all peoples, then there were the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of God was spread far and wide. You may learn this from the Acts of the Apostles. The innkeeper is a type and symbol of every apostle, teacher, and archpastor, to whom the Lord gave two pence, representing the two Testaments, Old and New. Just as both coins bear the image of the one king, so do both Testaments bear the words of the same God. When the Lord ascended into the heavens He left these two coins in the hands of the Apostles, and in the hands of the bishops and teachers of every generation. And He said to them, And whatsoever thou spendest more of thine own, I will repay thee. Indeed the Apostles spent much more of their own—with great labors they sowed the word of teaching everywhere. And those teachers in each generation who have explained the Old and the New Testaments have also spent much of their own, for which they will be rewarded when the Lord returns at the second coming. Then may each of them say to him, "Lord, Thou gayest me two pence; behold, another two pence have I spent of mine own." And to him the Lord will answer, "Well done, thou good servant."

1. The Greek word for "neighbour" is plesios, and has the literal meaning "one who is close." The question, Who is my neighbour? in Greek sounds very much like, "Who is close to me?" The English word "neighbor" and its German cognate Nachbar, likewise refer to "one who is nigh," or near.

2. Pandocheion, "inn," has the literal meaning "that which receives all."

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

Luke 12:16-21

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

16-21. **And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to gather my crops? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I gather all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast prepared? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.** The Lord had said that the life of a man is not lengthened by an abundance of possessions, and now He offers this parable in confirmation of this truth. See how He describes for us the insatiable thoughts of the foolish rich man. God did His part and showed His mercy; for all the ground of the rich man brought forth plentifully, not just one of his fields. But the rich man himself bore so little fruit from the mercy shown him that even before he had gathered the crops, he imagined them already locked up for himself. See also the pleasures of the rich man: What shall I do? Does not the pauper say the same thing as well, "What shall I do? I have nothing to eat or to put on." Think, if you will, about the words of the rich man. What shall I do, because I have no room where to gather my crops? At the very least, he could take a good rest. If both the pauper says, "What shall I do because I have not?" and the rich man says, "What shall I do because I have not?" then what do we gain by gathering more and more? We do not gain any rest, and it is clear from all the cares that come from our further efforts that we are piling up for ourselves only a great multitude of sins. Yet the foolish man says, I will pull down my barns, and build greater. And if your land yields even more bountifully in the future, will you pull these down and build again? But what need is there to pull down and build? You have available to you as storehouses the stomachs of the poor which can hold much, and are indestructible and imperishable. They are in fact heavenly

and divine storehouses, for he who feeds the pauper, feeds God. See something else that is foolish: my fruits and my goods. The rich man did not consider that he had received these things from God. If he had, he would have treated these things as would a steward of God. But he imagined that these things were the fruits of his own labors, which is why he usurped them for himself, calling them my fruits and my goods. "I am the sole owner," he thinks, "and there is no one else entitled to a share. These things are not God's, but mine, and therefore I alone will enjoy them. I will not now take God in as a partner to enjoy my profit." Because he spoke foolishly, let us see what happened. Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. He determines that he will have a long life, as if length of years was something else he could obtain by working his land. But a long life is not a crop you can grow, and it is not another of your belongings. "Eat, drink, and be merry. Three cheers for the good things of my soul!" But to eat and drink are the good things only of an irrational soul. Because this man has an irrational soul, it is fitting that he plans to reward himself with these things. But the good things of a rational soul are to understand, to reason, and to be glad in the law of God and in good thoughts. Do eating and drinking not suffice for you, 0 fool, but you must also order up for your soul that which accompanies these things, namely, shameful and base pleasure? Euphemistically did the Lord employ the words be merry, indicating by them the most wanton passions which are the consequence of too much food and drink. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul of thee. The words God said unto him do not mean that God conversed with the rich man, although the parable puts it in this form. Instead, the thoughts that came into the mans mind are what God spoke. Thou fool. He calls him a fool because everything he wanted was foolish, as we have shown. And every man like him is foolish and acts in vain, for, as David says, In vain doth every man disquiet himself [Ps. 38:14]. Why? Because he stores up things without knowing for whom he gathers them. How can he not be called a fool who does not know that the length of a man's life rests with God alone and that no man can set the limits of his own life?

Notice also the words, they will require. Like some stern imperial officers demanding tribute, the fearsome angels will ask for your soul, and you will not want to give it because you love this life and claim the things of this life

as your own. But they do not demand the soul of a righteous man, because he himself commits his soul into the hands of the God and Father of spirits, and he does so with joy and gladness, not in the least bit grieved that he is handing over his soul to God. For him the body is a light burden, easily shed. But the sinner has made his soul fleshy, something in substance like the body and like the earth, rendering it difficult to separate from the body. This is why the soul must be demanded of him, the same way that harsh tax collectors treat debtors who refuse to pay what is due. See that the Lord did not say, "I shall require thy soul of thee," but, they shall require. For the souls of the righteous are already in the hands of God. Truly it is at night when the soul of such a sinner is demanded of him. It is night for this sinner who is darkened by the love of wealth, and into whom the light of divine knowledge cannot penetrate, and death overtakes him. Thus he who lays up treasure for himself is called foolish: he never stops drawing up plans and dies in the midst of them. But if he had been laying up treasure for the poor and for God, it would not have been so. Let us strive, therefore, to be rich toward God, that is, to trust in God, to have Him as our wealth and the treasury of wealth, and not to speak of my goods but of "the good things of God." If they are God’s, then let us not deprive God of His own goods. This is what it means to be rich toward God: to trust that even if I empty myself and give everything away, I will not lack the necessities. God is my treasury of good things, and I open and take from that treasury what I need.

Twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Healing of the Woman with a Spirit of Infirmity
Luke 13:10-17
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

10-17. And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no wise straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead it away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. The woman suffered from this affliction as a result of demonic assault, as the Lord Himself says, This woman … whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years. Perhaps God had departed from her on account of certain sins, and as a result Satan was punishing her. For Satan is in part the cause of all the hardships which afflict our bodies, when God on high permits him. From the very beginning it was Satan who brought about our fall by which we lost the incorruptibility in which we had been created; it was Satan who caused us to be bound to diseased bodies prone to suffering, symbolized by the garments of dead skins in which Adam and Eve were wrapped [Gen. 3:22]. But now the Lord, with the majestic voice of the Godhead, full of power, drives out the infirmity of this woman. He places His hands on her, so that we might learn that His holy flesh imparted both the power and the energy of the Logos. For His flesh was His own, and not that of some other human person alongside Him, separate from Him in hypostasis, as the impious Nestorius thinks. (1) So great is the goodness of the Lord, Who in this manner took mercy on His own creation. But Satan,

who had bound the woman in the first place, was vexed at her deliverance because he desired her continued affliction, and so he bound the ruler of the synagogue with spite, and through the mouth of this man, Satan reviled the miracle. This is how he always attacks the good. Therefore the Lord uses the apt example of irrational animals to rebuke the man who was indignant that a healing had taken place on the Sabbath. And thus not only this man, but all the other adversaries of Jesus as well, were put to shame by Christ's words. For it was insane to hinder the healing of a man on the Sabbath using as a pretext the commandment that the Sabbath be a day of rest. So it was, that even while the people were rejoicing at the Lord's deeds, His adversaries were put to shame by His words. For these adversaries, instead of joining in the jubilation which followed His work of healing, burned with rage that He had healed at all. But the multitude, because they derived benefit from His signs, rejoiced and took pleasure in this healing. You must also understand these miracles to refer to the inner man. The soul is bent over in infirmity whenever it inclines to earthly thoughts alone and imagines nothing that is heavenly and divine. It can truly be said that such a soul has been infirm for eighteen years. For when a man is feeble in keeping the commandments of the divine law, which are ten in number, and is weak in his hope of the eighth age, the age to come, it can be said that he has been bent over for ten and eight years. (2) Is not that man indeed bent over who is attached to the earth, and who always sins in disregard of the commandments, and who does not look for the age to come? But the Lord heals such a soul on the Sabbath in the assembly of the synagogue. For when a man assembles together within himself thoughts of confession (Judah means "confession") and keeps the Sabbath, that is, he rests from doing evil, then Jesus heals him, not only by word when He says to him, Thou art loosed from thine infirmity, but also by deed. For when He has placed His hands on us, He requires that we accept the energy from His divine hands to do in collaboration with Him the works of virtue. We must not be satisfied to receive only that healing which comes by word and by instruction.

1. The heretic Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople from 428 to 431 A,D., taught that the co-unoriginate Logos was not conceived and did not take flesh in the Virgins womb, but instead was united to Christ the man at some later time. This implied that the two natures of Christ, the divine and the

human, were not united in one hypostasis, that is, in one person, but in two, and therefore were not truly united. If this were so, Christ would not have accomplished the salvation of the human race. As a result Nestorius called the Virgin Mary Christokos, that is, the Birthgiver of Christ, but refused to call her the Theotokos, the Birthgiver of God. This false teaching was condemned as heresy at the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus in the year 431, and from that time Nestorius and all who follow his teaching have been outside the Church.

2. The Greek text of the Gospel expresses the number of years in this fashion: ete deka kai okto, "ten and eight years."

Twenty-eighth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Supper
Luke 14:16-24
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

16-20. Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and called many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were called, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one accord began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Because the man who sat at table with Him had said, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, the Lord teaches him at some length what it means to feast with God, and tells this parable. By a certain man the Lord means His Father, the Lover of man. Whenever Scripture alludes to God's power to punish, He is called a panther, a leopard, or a bear [Hos. 13:7-8]. But whenever it alludes to God's love for man, He is presented as a man, as is the case here. Since the parable treats of God's extreme love for man and the divine economy of the Incarnation which He worked in us, making us sharers of the Flesh of His Son, the parable calls God a man and this divine economy a great supper. It is a supper because the Lord came in the last days, as it were at the evening of this age. And this supper is great because great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our salvation. [I Tim. 3:16] And he sent his servant at supper time. Who is this servant? The Son of God, Who assumed the form a servant and became man, and as a man is said to have been sent forth. Notice how He did not say "a servant," but instead, using the definite article, the servant [of his.] (1)

Christ is the One and only Servant Who in His human nature was perfectly obedient and pleasing to God. For Christ is pleasing to the Father not only as Son and God, but also as Man. He is the only Sinless One Who carried out all the counsels and commandments of the Father and fulfilled all righteousness, and in this sense is said to serve God the Father. He alone can be called the true Servant of God. He was sent at supper time, that is, at

the appointed and proper time. For there was no other time more opportune for our salvation than the reign of Caesar Augustus, when iniquity had reached its peak and it was critical that it be cleansed. Just as physicians allow a festering and malignant boil to burst and release all its foul pus, and only then apply the medication, so too it was necessary that sin first display all its forms, and then the Great Physician applied His medicine. For this very reason the Lord waited for the devil to fill the full measure of iniquity, and then the Son of God took flesh and healed every form of iniquity by every aspect of His holy life. Therefore He was sent at that hour, that is, at that comely and opportune season of which David says, Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, 0 Mighty One, in Thy comeliness. (2) Certainly the sword here signifies the Word of God [Heb. 4:12], while the words upon Thy thigh indicate His Nativity in the flesh which was in comeliness, that is, when the time was right and seemly. He was sent to speak to those who had been called. Who are those that were called? Perhaps this refers to all men. For God has called all to the knowledge of Him, by means of the order and harmony of visible creation, and by means of the natural law. But those that were called are also, more specifically, the children of Israel, who were called through the law and the prophets. In the first place, then, the Lord was sent to the sheep of the house of Israel. [Mt. 15:24] The Lord was saying to all the Jews, Come, for all things are now ready, when He proclaimed the good tidings that the kingdom of heaven is at hand [Mt. 4:17], and among you [Lk. 17:21].

And they all with one accord began to make excuse, that is, as if at a signal. For all the leaders of the Jews refused to have Jesus as their King, and thus were found unworthy of the supper, one because of his love of wealth, and another because of his love of pleasure. The man who bought a piece of ground and the man who bought the five yoke of oxen signify those who love wealth, while the man who married a wife signifies those who love pleasure. Furthermore, the man who bought a piece of ground signifies the man who cannot accept the mystery of faith because he is governed by the wisdom of this world. The piece of ground represents the world and, in general, nature, and the man who must go and see his piece of ground is he who sees only nature, and cannot accept what is beyond nature. Therefore the Pharisee, for example, "sees his piece of ground," that is, he looks only at the laws of nature and cannot accept that a Virgin gave birth to God,

because that is beyond nature. Because they are examining this "piece of ground," that is, nature, none of those who boast in external wisdom have recognized Jesus Who made nature new. The man who bought five yoke of oxen, and tested them, also represents a man who loves the material world. He has yoked the five senses of the soul to the five senses of the body and has made the soul into flesh. For this reason he is concerned only with the earth and does not desire to commune of the rational Supper, for as Wisdom says, How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough? [Eccles. (Wis. of Sirach) 38:25] He who stays behind because of a wife is a lover of pleasure who has devoted himself to the flesh, the mate of the soul. By cleaving to the flesh he cannot please God. You may also understand these things literally. We also fall away from God because of fields, because of yokes of oxen, because of marriages, when we become so attached to them that they consume our whole life and we are carried away even to the point of shedding blood over them. Then there is no divine thought or word that we can practice, or even comprehend.

21-24. So that servant came, and declared to his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were called shall taste of my supper. The rulers of the Jews were rejected, and not one of them believed in Christ. And they even boasted of their malice, saying, Have any of the rulers believed on Him? [Jn. 7:48] Therefore these students of the law and scribes, as the prophet says, became foolish and fell from grace. But the simple from among the Jews are likened to the halt, the blind, and the maimed. It is the foolish of this world, the lowly, who were called. For the multitude marvelled at the words of grace which proceeded from the mouth of Jesus, and they rejoiced in His teaching. But after these had come to Him from the sons of Israel, that is, from the chosen whom God foreordained for His glory, such as Peter, and the sons of Zebedee, and the tens of thousands of those Jews who believed, then God’s goodness was poured out also upon the Gentiles. For those who are in the highways and hedges mean the Gentiles. The Israelites were within the city, inasmuch as

they had received the lawgiving and inherited a civil and moral way of life. But the Gentiles were strangers to the Covenants, and the lawgiving of Christ was foreign to them. They were not fellow citizens of the saints, and did not travel the one true path, but instead followed many highways of lawlessness and coarseness, and were to be found in the hedges, that is, in sins. For sin is a great hedge and middle wall which separates us from God. By highways He signifies the Gentiles' coarse way of life, which led them to so many false beliefs. By hedges He signifies their life of sins. The master does not command his servant simply to call all those in the highways and hedges, but to compel them to come in, although each man is free whether to believe or not. But He uses the word compel to teach us that it is a sign of God's great power that the Gentiles, who were in such ignorance, came to believe. If the power of the preaching and the might of the word of truth had not been so great, how could men who were crazed with idol worship and practiced unspeakable things have been persuaded all at once to know the true God, and to perfect a spiritual life? He called this "compulsion" to show the miraculousness of their change. One might say that the pagan Greeks did not want to leave their idols and their rich feasting, yet they were compelled to flee from them by the truth of the Gospel. Also, the power of the miracles He worked was a strong force that induced them to be converted to faith in Christ. Every day this Supper is prepared and we are all invited to the kingdom which God prepared for man even before the foundation of the world. But we are not worthy of this Supper—some of us because of useless philosophical musings, others because of love of material things, and yet others because of pleasures of the flesh. But God in His love for man freely bestows this kingdom upon other sinners, upon the blind who have no spiritual vision to perceive the will of God; or if they can perceive it, upon those who are crippled and unable to take a step to do the will of God. And in short He grants the kingdom of heaven to all the poor who have fallen away from the glory above, and even to the maimed who cannot show forth in themselves a blameless life. To invite these sinners to the Supper, who are wandering astray in the streets and broad avenues of sin, the Father sends His Son Who became a Servant according to the flesh, and Who came not to call the righteous, but sinners. All these He feasts liberally, instead of the clever, the rich, and those who indulge the flesh. By the judgments known to Him alone He sends diseases and dangers upon many, causing them, even

against their will, to renounce this life. Thus He leads them to His Supper, "compelling" them by means of the dangers. There are many examples of this. Understood in a simpler way, this parable also teaches us to show favor to the poor and the crippled rather than to the rich, just as He exhorted us to do a short while before. [Lk. 14:13-14] It is for this reason that He tells this parable, to confirm that we must give hospitality to the poor. And we may also learn from this that we should be so eager and generous in welcoming our brethren that, even when they are reluctant, we should compel them to partake of our good things. This is also good advice for teachers—teach what is necessary, even when the students are unwilling.

1. The definite article is present in the Greek text, ton doulon autou [the servant of him], but not in the English translation, his servant, because in English the possessive pronoun coming before the noun replaces any articles.

2. Ps. 44:3. The Greek word oraiotetos, rendered here as comeliness, derives from the adjective oraios, which in turn derives from the noun ora, which means "hour." This Greek word for "beautiful," oraios, has a broad range of meanings including, "coming at the right season [ora], seasonable, timely, ripe, at the bloom of youth, beautiful."

Twenty-ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Healing of the Ten Lepers
Luke 17:12-19
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

11-19. And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found any that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. From this one may learn that nothing prevents a man from living in a manner pleasing to God, not even if he belongs to a despised race, if only he has a good will and disposition. For behold, ten lepers met Jesus as He was about to enter a certain city. They met Him outside the city, for those who were considered unclean were not permitted to go into the city. They stood afar off, as if ashamed of their supposed uncleanness, and did not dare to draw near, thinking that Jesus abhorred them as did the others. They lifted up their voices and made supplication. By physical location they were standing afar off, but in their supplication they were near. For the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him in truth. [Ps. 144:19] And they did not make supplication to Him as to a mere man, but as to One greater than a man. For they called Him Master, meaning Lord, Protector, and Guardian, which is not far from thinking of Him as God. The Lord instructs them to show themselves to the priests. Initially the priests would examine men such as these to determine whether they were lepers or not. For there were certain signs by which the priests could recognize incurable leprosy. But in addition to this, if it should happen that someone who had been suffering from leprosy was healed, the priests would again examine him to verify the cure, in which event the gift commanded by the law would be offered. [Lev. 14] In this case, since these

men were already confirmed lepers, why should they show themselves to the priests, unless indeed they were about to be cleansed? To command them to go the priests indicated nothing less than that they would be healed. This is why the Evangelist says that as they went, they were cleansed. Of the ten lepers, the nine who were Israelites showed themselves to be ungrateful, while it was the Samaritan, an accursed foreigner, as we said earlier, who returned to voice his gratitude. The Samaritans were Assyrians; therefore, let no Gentile despair, and let no one descended from holy forebears boast. This miracle also signifies the common salvation that came to the whole human race. For the ten lepers represent all of human nature—it was leprous with wickedness, carrying about with it the ugliness of sin, passing its life outside the heavenly city on account of its uncleanness, and standing afar off from God. But this very distance from God is itself a supplication. For when the Lover of mankind, Who wills that all should be saved and receive good things, sees someone who is not sharing in His goodness, then He is most quick to show mercy and to heal those who are so miserably afflicted. But He also healed the whole leprous nature of man, when, for every mans sake, He took flesh and tasted of death. Although the Jews had been cleansed of the uncleanness of their leprous sin, as far as it was the Lords part to do, they showed themselves ungrateful and did not return from the path of their vain foolishness to give glory to God Who saved them, that is, to believe in Him Who is God and Who endured the extremes of suffering. For this is the glory of God: His Flesh and His Cross. These Jews, then, did not confess the incarnate and crucified Lord of glory. But the foreign and accursed people of the Gentiles recognized the One Who makes clean, and they glorified Him by believing in Him. They believed that God loves man so much and is so powerful that He accepted the very depth of dishonor for our sake—this is His love of man—and having accepted it, He suffered no harm to His own nature—this is His power.

Thirtieth Sunday after Pentecost

Sell All That Thou Hast

Luke 18:18-27

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

18-23. And a certain ruler asked Him saying, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? None is good, save One, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. Some think that this man was cunning and sought to trap the Lord with words. But this is not how he appears; rather, he was a lover of money, and Christ Himself rebuked him as such. Mark says that the man came running, and knelt before Jesus, and asked Him his question, and that Jesus, beholding him, loved him. [Mk. 10:17-22] The man is a lover of money, and he approaches Jesus eager to learn how he, along with his wealth, might inherit eternal life. For there is no one who loves prolonged life as much as a man who loves money. Therefore this man thought that Jesus could show him some way in which he could live forever enjoying his possession of wealth. But when the Lord told him that non-possession is what bestows eternal life, he went away as if he regretted both his question and Jesus answer. In his mind he needed eternal life for the very reason that he had great wealth. If he were to give up his possessions, why would he want eternal life, he thought, since that life was to be the life of a pauper? He approached the Lord as if the Lord were merely a man and a teacher. Therefore the Lord shows him that he ought not to approach Him in this manner, saying, None is good, save One, that is, God. By this He means, "You call Me good; why then do you also call Me a teacher? It appears that you think that I am one among many men. But if this were so, I would not be good, for no man is good in and of himself. Only God is. If you want to call Me good, you must call Me good because I am God; do not approach Me then as if I were merely a man. But if you think I am only a man, do not call Me good. For in truth God is good,

and the source of goodness, and the first cause of goodness itself. If any man is good, he is not good in and of himself, but only because he receives a share of God's goodness. Moreover, what goodness a man has is changeable."

Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, and so forth. The law remedies first those sins into which we fall easily, and then those less frequent sins to which fewer men fall. And so adultery and murder are mentioned first, because lust and anger are difficult to control: lust is a raging fire, inflaming both the outer and inner man, and anger is a great wild beast. (1) But stealing comes from a less fierce passion and bearing false witness occurs rarely. Therefore, the law remedies first those sins into which we fall most easily, and which are the most grave. But the other sins, such as stealing and bearing false witness, He places second because they lead astray less often and are less grave than murder and adultery. To sin against ones parents He mentions last of all; for although it is a grave sin, it does not occur often. Rarely is there found a man so cruel that he abuses his parents. Because the young man said that he had kept all these commandments from his youth, the Lord enjoins him to keep that commandment which stands at the head of all: non-possession. Behold the laws of the true Christian life. Sell all that thou hast, the Lord says. If anything remains, you are its slave. And distribute, not to your rich relatives, but unto the poor. I think that the word distribute implies that the meting out of wealth is to be done with discernment and not haphazardly. And because a man must have all the other virtues as well as non-possession, the Lord then said, And come, follow Me, meaning, "Be My disciple in all things, and always keep following Me. (2) Do not follow Me today only, and leave Me tomorrow." Because the ruler was a lover of money, the Lord promised him treasure in heaven, but the ruler did not give heed, because he was a slave of his money. Therefore when he heard what the Lord had asked of him, he was sorrowful. For the Lord had counselled him to deprive himself of his wealth; yet that was the very reason he wanted eternal life in the first place, so that he could live forever enjoying his many possessions. That he was sorrowful shows that he was sincere and not devious. Not one of the Pharisees was ever sorrowful; instead, they raged even more against the Lord when they heard His answers to their questions. I am not unaware that

the great light of the world, John Chrysostom, believed that this young man truly desired eternal life, but that he was held fast by the love of money, a passion that was stronger than his love for eternal life. What we have said here is not inconsistent, namely, that the young man desired to have eternal life along with his wealth.

24-30. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, How hard it shall be for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needles eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And He said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee. And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of Gods sake, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come life everlasting. Because the rich man was sorrowful when he heard that he should give up his riches, the Lord said, as though He were marvelling, How hard it shall be for them that have riches toenter into the kingdom of God! He did not say that it would be impossible for those with wealth to enter, but that it would be difficult. It is not impossible for such as these to be saved. Those who give away their riches are able to obtain the heavenly things above. However, this is difficult, for money is stickier than glue and it is hard for a man to free himself when he is held fast by money. In His very next words the Lord indicates that this is so difficult that it is all but impossible, when He says, It is easier for a camel to go through a needles eye, than for a rich man to be saved. It is indeed impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, whether you understand camel to mean the animal or the thick rope used on a ship. Therefore, if it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle—which is impossible—than it is for a rich man to be saved, then it is even more impossible for a rich man to be saved. What does the Lord mean? First, that this statement is true: it is impossible for a rich man, while he is a rich man, to be saved. Do not say to me that such and such a rich man gave away his riches and was saved. He was not saved as a rich man; he was saved either as a man who had attained non-possession, or who had become a steward, but not as a rich man. A steward and a rich man are not the same. The rich man keeps riches for himself, while the steward, as a trustee, holds wealth for the benefit of

others. Therefore, if such a man is saved, he is not saved as a rich man, but, as we have said, because he has given away all that he has, or because he has spent his wealth as a good steward. Consider this as well: while it is impossible for a rich man to be saved, it is not impossible, but only difficult, for them that have riches to be saved. It is as if the Lord had said, "The rich man who is possessed by riches and is a slave to them and is held fast by them, shall not be saved. But he who only has riches, that is, who is master of riches, owning them without being owned by them, shall be saved with difficulty." That difficulty is because of human weakness. For it is impossible for us not to misuse what we have. As long as we have riches, the devil strives in every way to deceive us into using that wealth in ways that violate the canons and laws of stewardship, and only with great difficulty do we escape the devils traps. This is why non-possession is better, and almost unassailable by the evil one.

And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And He said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. With men who have merely a human outlook, that is, those who desire earthly things and are pulled downwards, it is impossible for them to be saved, as we have said. But with God it is possible. That is to say, with Gods help, when a man has God as his Counsellor, and takes as his teachers the judgments of God and His commandments concerning non-possession, and calls upon God for help, then it is possible to be saved. We, for our part, must desire what is good; God will then accomplish and perfect it in us. If we can only rise above our timid littleness of soul as concerns our wealth, and make for ourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness, we will be saved by those friends when they escort us to the eternal mansions. It is better if we give away all our wealth; and if not all, then at least let us share it with the poor. Thus the impossible becomes possible. For though it is impossible for the man who does not distribute all to be saved, yet through Gods love for man, even a partial distribution brings a partial benefit. In response to this, Peter asks, "Lo, we have left all. [What do we have to give to the poor?]" He does not ask this for his own sake alone, but in order to find some consolation for all the poor. Peter asks his question for fear that only the rich have the good hope to obtain much because they despised much, and that the poor have little hope because they had little to give away and thus can expect only a little reward. Peter asks, and hears the answer, that

everyone who despises, for Gods sake, whatever goods he may have, even if they are few, shall receive his reward both in this age and in the age to come. Do not consider those goods to be few; rather, for that poor man, his few things are his whole life. Just as you, the rich man, expect to pass your life with your many and great possessions, the pauper, likewise, expects to pass his life with his belongings, no matter how few and small they may be. Though his belongings are few, I will say that a mans attachment to his possessions is even greater when he owns little. This is clearly shown to be true with parents. The attachment of a parent to his only child is much greater than that of a parent to his many children. Likewise, the poor man has a keener love for his single house and single field than you have for your many houses and fields. And even if it is the case that a poor man is attached to his possessions to the same degree as a rich man, then, at a minimum, the loss is the same for each. Even in this present age, those who give of the little they have receive their reward many times over, as did these very Apostles. For each Apostle left his own hut, and now each one has magnificent temples in his name, with lands and triumphant processions, and, instead of a single wife, many women bound to him in fervent faith; in short, for everything they gave up, they have received many times over. And in the age to come they receive, not a multiplication of fields such as these and other tangible rewards, but eternal life.

1. Bl. Theophylact here includes lust with adultery, and anger with murder, in accordance with Christs commandments and teaching. See Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28.

2. In the Greek text, the word for "follow," akolouthei, is in the present imperative, implying a continuous action. By contrast, the two previous imperatives, poleson, "sell," and diados, "distribute," are in the aorist imperative, implying a single, finite action.

Thirty-first Sunday after Pentecost

The Blind Man at Jericho

Luke 18:35-43

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

35-43. And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should keep silent; but he cried so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when He was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. The Lord performed this wayside miracle of the blind man so that even His passage along a road would yield a profitable teaching for His disciples and for us: that we should in all things, at all times, and in every place do what is beneficial and never be idle. The blind man believed that Jesus was the awaited Messiah; having been raised among the Jews, it is certain that he knew that the Christ would be of the seed of David. Therefore he cries out with a great voice, Son of David, have mercy on me. His words have mercy on me show that he understood Jesus to be divine and not merely a man. Marvel at his staunch confession: although rebuked by many, he did not keep silent, but cried out all the more, urged on by the fervent zeal within him. Therefore Jesus summons him as one who is truly worthy to approach Him, and asks him, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? He asks the question, not in ignorance of what the blind man wanted, but so that it would not appear to the others who were present that the Lord gave something different from what the man wanted. Otherwise, some might have said that the Lord, in a vainglorious show of power, healed the mans blindness when the man had only been begging for alms.(1) Envy might well have inspired some to slander the Lord with such foolishness as this. Therefore the Lord asked the blind man what he wanted, and when He heard that he wanted his sight, He gave him his sight. See the

absence of vainglory—the Lord says, "Thy faith hath made thee whole. For you have believed with faith that I am the Son of David, the Christ, Who is now revealed, and you have shown such zeal that you did not keep silent even when rebuked." We may learn from this that when we ask with faith, God does not give something other than what we ask for, but the very same thing. However, when we ask for one thing and receive something else, it is clear that either we did not make a good request or we did not ask with faith. (2) See also the power of the Lord: Receive thy sight.(3) Which of the prophets ever healed in this manner, with such power? His voice, proceeding from Him Who is the true Light, became light to the blind man. See also the gratitude of the healed man: he followed Jesus, glorifying God, and causing others to do the same.

1. The Greek word eleos, "mercy," is also commonly used to mean "alms," i.e. mercy shown to the poor.

2. James 4:3. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.

3. In the Greek text, the Lord responds with a single word, anablepson, "see [again]."

Thirty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-10. And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus Who He was, and could not for the crowd, because he was of little stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down: for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. The Lord seizes the mightiest of the devil's vessels and destroys his cities. See how the Lord not only makes publicans His disciples, but He even takes prisoner, in order to save him, the chief of publicans, Zacchaeus. No one doubts that a publican is an abomination: how much more so is the chief publican, who is foremost in wickedness? For the publicans derived their living from no other source than the tears of the poor. But even this chief publican is not despised by the Lord. In return only for showing eagerness to see Jesus he receives salvation. He desired to see Jesus, which is why he climbed up into the sycamore tree, but before he had caught sight of Jesus, the Lord had already seen him. In the same manner, the Lord always anticipates us if only He sees that we are willing and eager. When the Lord sees Zacchaeus, He urges him to come down quickly, for He intends to stay at his house. And Zacchaeus was not slow to obey—when Christ commands anything, we must not hesitate—but he came down and received Him joyfully, even though many people murmured. Let us see how Zacchaeus reaped the benefit of Christs entrance into his house. He says, The half of my goods I give to the poor. Do you see his fervor? He began to

disburse without stint, not giving just a little, but all that he had. Even what he held back, he held back so that he could give to those whom he had wronged. From this we learn that there is no benefit at all to a man who gives alms to others of money he has obtained unrighteously, and ignores those whom he defrauded in obtaining that money. See what Zacchaeus does with this money: if he defrauded anyone, he restores to him fourfold, thus remedying the harm he had done to each man he defrauded. This is true almsgiving. He not only remedies the harm, but he does so with increase. This is in accordance with the law, which commanded that the thief make fourfold restitution. [Ex.22:1] If we consider this well, we see that nothing at all remained of Zacchaeus money. Half he gave to the poor, and of the half that remained to him, he gave fourfold to those whom he had wronged. But since the living of the chief publican was derived from fraud and extortion, and since he paid back fourfold all that he wrongly taken, it follows that he stripped himself of everything that he had. From this we see that his thinking goes beyond the prescription of the law, for he had become a disciple of the Gospel, and he loved his neighbor more than himself. And what he promised to do, he did: he did not say, "I shall give half, and I shall restore fourfold," but instead, Behold, I give and I restore. For he had heard the counsel of Solomon, Say not, Come back another time, tomorrow I will give. [Prov. 3:28] Christ proclaims to him the good tidings of his salvation, saying, "Today you give, today salvation is come to you." By saying, to this house, the Lord indicates that Zacchaeus himself has received salvation. By this house He means Zacchaeus, for the Lord would not call a building without a soul a son of Abraham. It is clear that the Lord named this living master of the house a son of Abraham, because Zacchaeus was like the Patriarch in two respects: he believed and was counted righteous by faith, and with money he was magnanimous and generous to the poor. See that the Lord says that Zacchaeus is now a son of Abraham, and that in his present behavior the Lord sees the likeness to Abraham. The Lord did not say that Zacchaeus had always been a son of Abraham, but that he now is. Before, when he was a chief publican and tax collector, he bore no resemblance to that righteous man, and was not his son. To silence those who were complaining that the Lord went to be the guest of a sinful man, He says, The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

This is the explanation of the literal words; but it is easy to understand these things in another sense as well, for moral benefit. Anyone who is chief among many in wickedness is little in spiritual stature, for the flesh and the spirit are opposites to one another, and for this reason he cannot see Jesus for the crowd. Crowded in by a multitude of passions and worldly affairs, he is not able to see Jesus acting, moving, and walking about. Such a man as this cannot recognize Christian acts for what they are, namely, Christ acting and moving in us. But such a man, who never sees Jesus passing by and cannot perceive Christ in Christian acts, will sometimes change from negligence and come to his senses. Then he will climb up to the top of the sycamore-fig, passing by every pleasure and sweetness, as signified by the figs, and counting them as foolish and dead. Becoming higher than he was and making ascents in his heart, [Ps. 83:6] he is seen by Jesus and can see Jesus, and the Lord says to him, Make haste, and come down, which means, "Through repentance you have ascended to a higher life; come down now through humility lest pride and high mindedness make you fall. Make haste, and humble yourself. If you humble yourself, I must abide at your house, for it is necessary that I abide in the house of a humble man. Upon whom shall I look, if not upon him who is humble and meek, who trembles at My words? [Is. 66:2] Such a man gives half of his goods to the destitute demons. For our substance is twofold: flesh and spirit. The righteous man imparts all his fleshly substance to the truly poor, the demons who are destitute of everything good. But he does not let go of his spiritual substance, for as the Lord likewise said to the devil concerning Job, Behold, I give into thine hand all that he has, but touch not his soul. [Job 1:12] And if he has taken any thing from any man by false accusation, he restores it to him fourfold. This suggests that if a man repents and follows a path that is opposite to his former way of wickedness, he heals his former sins through the four virtues, (1)and thus he receives salvation and is called a son of Abraham. Like Abraham, he also goes out of his land and out of his kinship with his former wickedness and out of the house of his father, meaning, he comes out from his old self and rejects his former condition. He himself was the house of his father, the devil. Therefore, when he went out of the house of his father, that is, when he went out of himself and changed, he found salvation, as did Abraham.

1. The four universal virtues are courage, prudence, righteousness, and self-control. See Vol. 1, The Explanation of St. Matthew, p. 7.

Thirty-third Sunday after Pentecost

The Publican and the Pharisee
Luke 18:10-14
From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

9-14. **And He spake this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus within himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house counted righteous rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.** The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness, which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God, takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before. The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For he says, God, I thank Thee. But the words that follow are full of foolishness. For he does not say, "that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities." Instead he says, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or worker of iniquity." He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as

something done by his own strength. How can a man who knows that what he has, he has received from God, [compare other men to himself unfavorably] and judge them? For certainly if a man believed that he had received as a gift good things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee stood, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, see what follows: he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nonetheless, how the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. For after he says, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, naming this, this, and this, then he declares his good deeds, fasting twice a week and giving tithes of all that he possesses. [The order of his prayer shows us that] we must first refrain from wickedness, and then set our hand to virtue. For one must not only turn away from evil, but also do good. [Ps. 33:14] In the same way, a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring first cleans out the mud and only then can he draw pure water. Consider this as well, that the Pharisee did not say, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are." He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, and so he uses them in the plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, by contrast he points to himself, saying, I fast twice in the Sabbath, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called "the Sabbath," taking its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called Sabbat, and the week was called Sabbata, being the plural form of Sabbat. Whence it is that mian Sabattn [Mk. 16:2] is the first day of the week, which we call "the Lords Day" [Sunday]. Among the Hebrews mian means the same thing as first. (1) There is also another, more profound, explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee

boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, (2) he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. "I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others," he says, "that I give alms of everything I have." Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy, if you apply yourself diligently. [Dt.12:11,17; 14:22,28; 26:12.] So much for the Pharisee. Now we turn to the publican and see that he is the Pharisees exact opposite in every regard. He stood afar off, and kept himself at a great distance, not only in physical location, but in his demeanor, in his words, and in his compunction of heart. He was ashamed to lift up his eyes to heaven, for he considered his eyes unworthy of heavenly vision because they had desired to see and to enjoy the good things of earth. And he smote himself upon the breast, striking his heart, as it were, because of its evil designs, and awakening it because it had been sleeping. And the publican said no other words than, God be merciful to me a sinner. Because of all these things he went down to his house counted righteous, rather than the other. For every proud heart is unclean in the Lords eyes, and the Lord resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble. [Prov. 3:34, I Pet 5:5] But one might wonder why it is that the Pharisee is condemned for speaking a few boastful words, while Job receives a crown for speaking many such words. (3)The answer is that the Pharisee stood and spoke these vain words under no compulsion, and he condemned others for no reason. But with Job, his friends pressed him and bore down upon him more fiercely than did his own calamities, telling him that he was suffering these things because of his sins. Job was compelled to enumerate his good deeds, but he did so for the glory of God, and so that men would not be misled from the path of virtue. For if men came to hear that Job was suffering because what he had done was sinful, they would not act as Job had. As a result they would become haters of strangers instead of hospitable to strangers, merciless instead of merciful, and unrighteous instead of righteous; for such were the good deeds of Job. Therefore Job enumerated his virtues so that others would not be misled and harmed. Shall we not say that his words, which may seem boastful, in fact are radiant with humility? Oh that I were as in months past, he said, wherein God preserved

me! [Job 29:2] Do you see that he attributes everything to God and does not judge others? Instead he is judged by his friends. But condemnation rightly falls upon the Pharisee, who attributed everything to himself and not to God, and judged others for no reason whatsoever. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled and condemned by God; and he that humbleth himself when he is condemned by others shall be exalted and counted righteous by God. The Lord is saying, "You, 0 Christian, be the first to tell your sins, so that you may be counted righteous."

1. Mian is the Greek cardinal number, meaning "one," used in this idiom instead of what would be expected, the ordinal number, prtn. This echoes the Hebrew expression.

2. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has always taught the faithful to fast instead on Wednesdays and Fridays, in remembrance of the Lords betrayal by Judas and His crucifixion. The earliest documentary proof of this practice dates from the year 120 A.D. and may be found in The Teaching [Didache] of the Twelve Apostles. See The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 379.

3. See Job 29, wherein Job states that he had saved the poor out of the hand of the oppressor, helped the fatherless, put on righteousness, been the eye of the blind and the foot of the lame, and much more.

Thirty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

11-16. And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of the property that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there squandered his property with prodigal living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he longed to fill his belly with the pods that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. This parable is like those which precede it. For it also presents a man, Who is in fact God, the Lover of man. The two sons represent the two kinds of men, righteous and sinners. The younger son said, Give me the portion of the property that falleth to me. Of old, from the beginning, righteousness belonged to human nature, which is why the older son [born at the beginning] does not become estranged from the father. But sin is an evil thing which was born later. This is why it is the younger son who alienates himself from the father, for the latter-born son grew up together with sin which had insinuated itself into man at a later time. The sinner is also called the younger son because the sinner is an innovator, a revolutionary, and a rebel who defies his Fathers will. Father, give me the portion of the property [ousia] that falleth to me. (1) The essential property of man is his rational mind, his logos, (2) always accompanied by his free will [autexousia], for all that is rational is inherently self-governing. (3) The Lord gives us logos for us to use, according to our free will, as our own essential property. He gives to all alike, so that all alike are rational, and all alike are self-governing. But some of us use this generous gift rationally, in accordance with logos, while others of us squander the divine gift. Moreover, everything which the Lord has given us might be called our property, that is, the sky, the earth, the whole creation, the law and the prophets. But the later sinful generation, the younger son, saw the sky and made it a god, saw the earth and worshipped it, refused to walk in the way of Gods law, and did evil to the prophets. On

the other hand, the elder son, the righteous, used all these things for the glory of God. Therefore, having given all an equal share of logos and self-determination, God permits us to make our way according to our own will and compels no one to serve Him who is unwilling. If He had wanted to compel us, He would not have created us with logos and a free will. But the younger son completely spent this inheritance. Why? Because he had gone into a far country. When a man rebels against God and places himself far away from the fear of God, then he squanders all the divine gifts. But when we are near to God, we do not do such deeds that merit our destruction. As it is written, I beheld the Lord ever before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken. [Ps. 15:8] But when we are far from God and become rebellious, we both do and suffer the worst things, as it is written, Behold, they that remove themselves from Thee shall perish. [Ps. 72:25]

The younger son indeed squandered and scattered his property. (4) For every virtue is a simple and single entity, while its opposing vice is a many-branched complexity, creating numerous deceptions and errors. For example, the definition of bravery is simple—when, how, and against whom, one ought to make use of ones capacity to be stirred to action. But the vice of not being brave takes two forms, cowardice and recklessness. Do you see how logos can be scattered in every direction and the unity of virtue destroyed? When this essential property has been spent, and a man no longer walks in accordance with logos, by which I mean the natural law, nor proceeds according to the written law, nor listens to the prophets, then there arises a mighty famine—not a famine of bread, but a famine of hearing the word [logos] of the Lord. [Amos 8:11] And he begins to be in want, because by not fearing the Lord he has departed far from Him. But there is no want to them that fear the Lord. [Ps. 33:9] How is there no want to them that fear Him? Because blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; in His commandments shall he greatly delight. Therefore glory and riches shall be in his house, and far from being himself in want, he hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor. [All from Ps. 111] Therefore the man who makes a journey far from God, not keeping Gods dread face ever before his eyes, indeed is in want, having no divine logos at work in him. And he went, that is, he proceeded and advanced in wickedness, and joined himself to a citizen of that country. He who is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him. But he who is joined to a harlot, that is, to the nature of the

demons, becomes one body with her, [I Cor. 6:16] and he makes himself all flesh, having no room in himself for the Spirit, as it was for those men at the time of the flood. (5) The citizens of that country far from God are none other than the demons. The man who joins himself to these citizens, having advanced and become powerful in wickedness, feeds the swine, that is, he teaches others evil and filthy deeds. For all those who take pleasure in the muck of shameful deeds and carnal passions are like swine. Pigs are never able to look upward because of the peculiar shape of their eyes. This is why, when a farmer grabs hold of a pig, he is not able to make it stop squealing until he turns it upside down on its back. This quiets the pig, as if, by looking upward, the pig can see things it had never seen before, and it is startled into silence. Such are they whose eyes are ever turned to filthy things, who never look upward. Therefore, a man who exceeds many others in wickedness can be said to feed swine. Such are the keepers of brothels, the captains of brigands, and the chief among publicans. All these may be said to feed swine. This wretched man desires to satisfy his sin and no one can give him this satisfaction. For he who is habitual in sinful passions receives no satisfaction from them. The pleasure does not endure, but is there one moment and gone the next, and the wretched man is again left empty. Sin is likened to the pods (6)which the swine eat, because, like them, sin is sweet in taste yet rough and harsh in texture, giving momentary pleasure but causing ceaseless torments. Therefore, there is no man to provide satisfaction for him who takes pleasure in these wicked passions. Who can both satisfy him and quiet him? Cannot God? But God is not present, for the man who eats these things has travelled a far distance from God. Can the demons? They cannot, for they strive to accomplish just the opposite, namely, that wickedness never end or be satisfied.

17-21. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son. The man who until now had been

prodigal came to himself. This is because he had been "outside himself" and had taken leave of his true self so long as he committed foul deeds. Rightly is it said that he wasted and spent his essential property. This is why he was outside himself. For he who is not governed by logos, but lives irrationally without logos, and teaches others to do the same, is outside of himself and has abandoned his reason, which is his very essence. But when a man regains his logos [analogizetai] so as to see who he is and into what a state of wretchedness he has fallen, then he becomes himself again, and using his reason, he comes to repent and returns from his wanderings outside reason. He says hired servants, signifying the catechumens, who have not yet become sons because they have not yet been illumined by Holy Baptism. Indeed the catechumens have an abundance of the rational bread, the sustenance of the Word [Logos], because they hear each day the readings of Scripture. (7) Listen, so that you may learn the difference between a hired servant and a son. There are three ranks of those who are being saved. The first kind are like slaves who do what is good because they fear the judgment. This is what David means when he says, Nail down my flesh with the fear of Thee, for of Thy judgments am I afraid. [Ps. 118:120] The second kind, who are like hired servants, are those who are eager to serve God because of their desire for the reward of good things, as David again says, I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes for ever for a recompense. [Ps. 118:112] But if they are of the third kind, that is, if they are sons, they keep His commandments out of love for God. This is what David means when he says, 0 how I have loved Thy law, 0 Lord! The whole day long it is my meditation; [Ps.118:97] and again, with no mention of fear, I lifted up my hands to Thy commandments which I have loved, [Ps. 118:48] and again, Wonderful are Thy testimonies, and because they are wonderful, therefore hath my soul searched them out. [Ps. 118:129] One must understand the hired servants to refer not only to the catechumens, but also to all those in the Church who obey God out of some lesser motive than love. Therefore when a man is among the ranks of those who are sons, and then is disowned because of his sin, and sees others enjoying the divine gifts, and communing of the Divine Mysteries and of the Divine Bread, such a man ought indeed to apply to himself these piteous words, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, arise, that is, from my fall into sin, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven,

and before Thee. When I abandoned heavenly things, I sinned against heaven, preferring shameful pleasure to heavenly things, and choosing the land of hunger instead of my true fatherland, heaven. Just as we have a saying that the man who prefers lead to gold sins against the gold, so too the man who prefers earthly things to heaven, sins against heaven. Indeed he has gone astray from the road that leads to heaven. Understand that when he sinned, he behaved as if he were not acting in the sight of God, that is, in the presence of God; but once he confesses his sin, then he realizes that he has sinned in the sight of God. And he arose, and came to his father, for we must not only desire the things that are dear to God but must get up and do them as well. You see the warm repentance—behold now the compassion of the father. He did not wait for his son to come to him, but he went and met him on the way and embraced him. God is called Father on account of His goodness and kindness, even though by nature He is God Who encompasses all things so that He could have restricted a man within His embrace, no matter which way the man might try to turn. As the prophet says, The glory of God shall compass thee. [Is. 58:8] Before, when the son distanced himself, it was fitting that God, as Father, release him from His embrace. But when the son drew near through prayer and repentance, it was fitting that God again enclose him within His embrace. Therefore the Father falls on the neck of the one who before had rebelled and who now shows that he has become obedient. And the Father kisses him, as a sign of reconciliation, and by this kiss He first makes holy the defiled ones mouth, which is as it were the doorway to the whole man, and through this doorway He sends sanctification into the innermost being.

22-24. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the first robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the grain-fed bullock, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. The servants you may understand to mean the angels, the ministering spirits who are sent to serve those who are counted worthy of salvation. For the angels clothe the man who has turned from wickedness with the first robe, that is, with the original garment which we wore before we sinned, the garment of incorruption; or, it means that garment which is honored above all others, the robe of Baptism. For the baptismal robe is the first to be placed around me, and from it I receive a covering of my former

shame and indecency. Therefore you may understand the servants to mean the angels who carry out all those things that are done on our behalf, and by means of which we are sanctified. You may also understand the servants to mean the priests. For they clothe the repentant sinner with Baptism and the word of teaching, placing around him the first robe, which is Christ Himself (for all we that have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (8)). And they put a ring on his hand, which ring is the seal of Christ given at Chrismation so that we might execute good deeds in His name. The hand is a symbol of action, and the ring is a symbol of a seal. Therefore he who has been baptized, and, in general, everyone who has turned from wickedness, ought to have on his hand, that is, on his entire faculty of action, the seal and the mark of Christ, which is placed on him to show that he has been made new in the image of his Creator. You may also understand the ring to signify the earnest of the Spirit. (9) By that I mean that God will give us perfect and complete good things when it is time for them; but for now He gives us gifts as earnest, that is, as tokens of assurance of those good things to come. For example, to some He gives the power to work miracles, to others the gift of teaching, and to others still other gifts; having received these gifts, we have more confident hope in the perfect and complete good things to come. And shoes are put on his feet to protect him from scorpions, that is, from the seemingly small and hidden sins described by David [Ps.18:12], which are in fact deadly. And these shoes also protect him from serpents, that is, from those sins which can be seen by all. And, in another sense, shoes are given to him who has been counted worthy of the first robe: God makes such a man ready to preach the Gospel and to bring benefit to others. This is Christianity—to benefit ones neighbor. We are not ignorant of what is meant by the grain-fed bullock which is slain and eaten. (10) It is none other than the very Son of God, Who as a Man took flesh which is irrational and animal by nature, although He filled it with His own glory. Thus Christ is symbolized by the bullock, the Youngling which has never been put under the yoke of the law of sin; and He is grain-fed in the sense that Christ was set apart and prepared for this mystery from before the foundation of the world. And though it may seem somewhat difficult to take in, nevertheless it shall be said: the Bread which we break in the Eucharist appears to our eyes to be made of wheat [sitos] and thus may be called of wheat [siteutos]; but in reality it is Flesh, and thus may be called the Bullock. For Christ Himself is both Bullock and Wheat. Therefore every

one who is baptized and becomes a son of God, or rather, is restored to the status of son, and in general, every one who is cleansed from sin, communes of this Bullock of Wheat. Then he becomes the cause of gladness to the Father and to His servants, namely, the angels and the priests, because he who was dead is alive again, and he who was lost is found. For whoever is dead from the abundance of his wickedness is without hope; but whoever is able, with his changeable human nature, to change from wickedness to virtue, is said to be only lost. To be lost is less severe than to be dead.

25-32. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the grain-fed bullock, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the grain-fed bullock. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. Here is the celebrated question—how is it that the son who lived a God-pleasing life in all other respects, and who faithfully served his father, could display such envy? The question will be answered if one considers the reason why this parable was told. This parable and the ones preceding it were told because the Pharisees, who considered themselves pure and righteous, were grumbling at the Lord because He received harlots and publicans. The Pharisees murmured indignantly, believing themselves to be more righteous than the publicans, and therefore the Lord taught this parable. Consider that the figure of the son who is seen to grumble is understood to refer to all those who are scandalized at the sudden good fortune and deliverance of sinners. Such men grumble, not because of envy, but because neither they nor we can understand the outpouring of Gods compassion for man. Does not David bring forward the figure of a man scandalized at the peace of sinners? [Ps. 72:3] And Jeremiah likewise, when he says, Why is it that the

way of ungodly men prosper? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root.[Jer. 12:1-2] Such thoughts reflect mans weak and poor understanding, which easily ignites with annoyance and questions the good fortune of the wicked, which seems undeserved. In this parable, therefore, the Lord is saying to the Pharisees words like these: "Let us suppose that you are as righteous as that elder son and well-pleasing to the Father; I entreat you who are righteous and pure not to grumble, as this elder son did, against the gladness which we are showing over the salvation of the sinner, who is also a son." Do you see that this parable is not about envy? Instead, in this parable the Lord is instructing the minds of the Pharisees, so that they will not be vexed that the Lord receives sinners, even though they themselves are righteous and have fulfilled every commandment of God. It is no wonder that we do become vexed at those who appear undeserving. For Gods compassion is so great, and He gives to us so abundantly of His own good things, that we may even grumble at Gods generosity. That criticism follows generosity is a fact to which we refer in everyday speech. If we do good to someone who fails to thank us, do we not say to him, "Everyone says I am a fool for having been so good to you"? We use this expression, even if no one has actually criticized us, because extreme generosity is so often followed by criticism that to suggest the latter is to prove the former. But let us turn to the particulars of the parable, in brief. The elder son was in the field, that is, in this world, working his own land, meaning his flesh, so that he might have his fill of bread, sowing with tears that he might reap with rejoicing. When he learned what was being done, he did not want to enter into the common joy. But the compassionate father goes out and begs him to come in, and explains to him the reason for the joy, that a man who was dead has come back to life. Because as a man he did not understand, and because he was scandalized, the elder son accused the father of not giving him even a young goat, while for the prodigal son he slaughtered the fatted calf. What does the kid, the young goat, signify? You may learn here. Every young goat is considered to be of the portion of sinners who are placed on the left side. The righteous son is saying, then, "I have passed my life in toil and labor, I have been persecuted, suffered hardships, been oppressed by sinners, and on my behalf you have never slaughtered and killed a kid, that is, a sinner who afflicts me, so that I might have some small measure of rest." For example, King Ahab was just such a goat to the Prophet Elijah. Ahab persecuted Elijah, but the Lord did not quickly give

this goat over to the slaughter so that Elijah could have some small rest, and take his ease with his friends, the prophets. Therefore Elijah complained to God, Lord, they have digged down Thine altars, and have slain Thy prophets. [III Kings 19:10] And Saul was a goat to David, as were also all those who slandered David. But the Lord allowed them to tempt him, and did not slay them to give David some rest. Therefore David said, How long shall sinners, 0 Lord, how long shall sinners boast? [Ps. 93:3] The elder son in the parable is saying these things: "You did not count me worthy of any consolation in all my toils; you never handed over to me for slaughter any of these who were afflicting me. But now you save the prodigal son who never had to toil." This, then, is the entire purpose of the parable, which the Lord told for the sake of the Pharisees who were grumbling that He had accepted sinners. The parable also instructs us that no matter how righteous we may be, we ought not to rebuff sinners, nor to grumble when God accepts them. The younger son, therefore, represents the harlots and the publicans; the elder son represents those Pharisees and scribes who consider themselves righteous. It is as if God were saying, "Let us suppose that you are indeed righteous and have not transgressed any commandments; if some others have turned away from wickedness, why do you not accept them as your brothers and fellow laborers?" The Lord instructs such grumblers as these with this parable. I am not unaware that some have interpreted the elder son to signify the angels, and the younger son, the latter-born nature of men which rebelled against the commandment it was given and went astray. Still others have said that the two sons represent the Israelites and the Gentiles who later believed. But the simple truth is what we have said here, namely, that the person of the elder son should be understood to signify the righteous, and the person of the younger son, to signify sinners who have repented and returned. The entirety of the parable is given for the sake of the Pharisees, to teach them not to be vexed that sinners are received, even if they themselves are righteous. Therefore, let no one be vexed at the judgments of God, but let him be patient with those apparent sinners who prosper, and are saved. For how do you know if a man whom you think is a sinner has not repented, and on this account has been accepted? Or that he has secret virtues on account of which God looks favorably upon him?

1. The more mundane meaning of the Greek word ousia is "what belongs to someone," i.e. his property. But ousia, a noun derived from the present

participle of the verb eimi, "to be," also means "essence," "substance," and "being" itself. What a man truly is differs not at all from what belongs to him essentially. Because no single word in English captures the related meanings of ousia, we have variously translated this word as "property" or "essential property."

2. The Greek word logos, as understood by the Church, encompasses not only Christ Himself, the "Word" of God, but also the faculties of speech, thought, mind, and reason which God gave of Himself to those created beings, angels and men, whom He fashioned in His own image and likeness. No single English word suffices to translate these many and related meanings. Because logos is central to Bl. Theophylacts explanation here, we have identified throughout this parable the word logos in the various forms in which it is used (e.g. to logikon), so as to alert the reader to the interrelatedness of several concepts which might otherwise seem unconnected in English.

3. The Greek word autexousia, often translated as "free will," has the literal meaning of "self-authority" [auto-exousia], or "self-determination." When God created man with autexousia, He ceded to man authority over his own essential property, his logos, that is, He gave man a free will.

4. The Greek word which we have translated here as squander is diaskorpizei, which literally means "scatter."

5. See Gen. 6:4: And the Lord God said, My spirit shall certainly not remain among these men for ever, because they are flesh.

6. In Greek, keratia, "little horns," another name for the edible pods of the carob tree. See Vol. I, The Explanation of St. Matthew, p. 33, footnote 4.

7. The first part of the Divine Liturgy, called The Liturgy of the Catechumens, consists primarily of the readings from the Psalter, the Epistles, and the Gospel. After this, in the ancient church, the catechumens actually left the temple as they were not able to partake of, or even to witness, the Mystical Bread.

8. See Gal. 3:27. This verse is also chanted as a hymn at every Baptism and at the great feasts of the Lord.

9. See II Cor. 1:21-22. Now He Which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

10. To translate ton moschon ton siteuton as "the fatted calf," as does the KJV, does not allow the reader to see what is so clear in the Greek text—that the animal in question is male, a young bullock, and raised on grain in anticipation of its slaughter for food or for sacrifice. The Greek adjective siteutos, derived from the noun sitos, "grain," means "of grain" or "made of grain."